Double Issue: State Autonomy

Critical Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal *of* Politics *and* Society

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Why the State Was Dropped	**David Ciepley**
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ever, exhibit a significant degree of "autonomy" from the societies they govern.

Positing a clear division between the state and society may seem counterintuitive to those of us who have grown up under democratic states, which are generally understood as reflecting their citizens' interests and demands. As Richard T. Ely (1894, 85-88), the founder of the American Economic Association, put it, "the state is not something apart from us and outside us, but we ourselves." In democratic societies the state is supposed to be both directed and constrained by public opinion.

This view of the relationship between state and society was dominant in American political science up until the 1960s. Mainstream "pluralist" scholars operated under the assumption that state policies were the result of the interaction of competing societal groups. Even the Marxist critics of pluralism did not debate whether the state was autonomous from society. Instead, the question they asked was whether the state was controlled by all of society, in the form of its many interest groups; or by just one segment of society, the ruling class.

David Ciepley argues below that the pluralists' neglect of the state originated in their attempts to draw meaningful distinctions between the postwar American state and the Nazi and Soviet regimes. Because pluralists focused on differences between the democratic and totalitarian features of these states, they shifted attention away from the possibility that increasingly powerful democratic governments could institute policies without the consent of those they governed.

In the 1970s and 1980s Marxism and pluralism were challenged by scholars who argued that government policies are often the result of officials pursuing goals of their own, goals that are not generated by the societies over which the officials preside. The high point of these scholarly efforts was the publication of *Bringing the State Back In* (1985). This volume not only contained empirical studies of "state autonomy," but was prefaced by Theda Skocpol's foundational essay, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research." Skocpol's article set out the assumptions and central claims of state theory, and outlined the promise of its future applications.

The chief contribution of *Bringing the State Back In* was to substantiate the claim that "states conceived as organizations claiming control over territories and people may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society" (Skocpol 1985, 9). Numerous contributors to

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Bringing the State Back In highlighted instances in which states pursued goals set by their officials, and in the process often shaped the societies that previous theorists assumed controlled the state. Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Peter Evans noted that autonomy was almost a prerequisite for states to act at all: "We take the importance of relative autonomy to be as established as the need for a bureaucratic apparatus. . . . In particular . . . a certain autonomy is necessary not only to formulate collective goals but to implement them as well" (Rueschemeyer and Evans 1985, 49).

The contributors to *Bringing the State Back In* describe a variety of circumstances that enable states to act autonomously. These circumstances tend to produce military control over a given territory by means of standing armies backed by loyal bureaucracies. Charles Tilly (1985) argues that only states that monopolized the control of legitimate domestic coercion could meet international threats from hostile states; and that only states that developed bureaucratic means of extracting resources from society could secure such a monopoly. But while independent bureaucratic organizations were initially developed to support states' war-making capacities, these organizations were often subsequently used to pursue other goals, such as industrial policy in the Third World (e.g., Haggard 1990, Wade 1990). Thus, in many cases state actors were instrumental in the economic development of their countries. Evans (1985, 216) notes that "in the Third World, trade and capital flows are associated, not with supine and inhibited state apparatuses, but with an expansion of the domestic role of the state." Similarly, Alice Amsden (1985, 86) shows that the Taiwanese state parlayed its military might into control over the economy. Aided by bureaucratic organizations that stemmed from Taiwan's military origins, the Taiwanese state dispensed credit to farmers, used its monopoly over fertilizer production to favor some forms of agriculture over others, and controlled the dissemination of information by manipulating the agricultural associations previously developed by the Japanese.

Although they view the state as relatively autonomous, many of the contributors to *Bringing the State Back In* recognize that even "autonomous" states are frequently constrained by elements of society. Rueschemeyer and Evans argue that the tendency for autonomous state policies to affect societal groups can stimulate attempts to capture various state bureaucracies, a process that can lead to the "balkanization" of the state that is the subject of so much of contemporary public-choice theory. Similarly, Alfred Stepan's comparative study (1985) of states' eco-

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nomic policies in Latin American countries suggests that state policies that led to successful economic development often empowered various social groups, increasing their capacities to pressure the state with their demands. In contrast, state policies that failed to produce economic growth often destabilized social efforts to pressure the state, ironically leading to greater state autonomy. Peter Katzenstein contends that the dense networks of state and societal actors involved in the formation of Austrian and Swiss public policy have had differential effects on the comparative strength of the Austrian and Swiss states. In Austria the inclusion of business, labor, and other societal groups in drafting policy has weakened state capabilities, while in Switzerland, the state's role as a mediator among clashing social interests gives it "the role of an arbiter that enjoys wide discretionary powers among plural conflicts" (Katzenstein 1985, 241).

Katzenstein's chapter, however, is one of the few in Skocpol volume that discuss the autonomy of *democratic* states. Most contributors to the book focus on premodern states, or on modern states, such as those governing the newly industrialized countries, that are not fully democratic. And when democratic states are discussed in the book, the paradoxical coexistence of state autonomy and democratic control of the state is not squarely addressed.

For example, Katzenstein argues that the Swiss Permanent Economic Delegation for Economic Negotiations—a highly exclusive body of government officials, senior bureaucrats, and powerful interest-group elites—drafts foreign economic policy autonomously from Swiss society. Katzenstein (1985, 244) writes that "here all the threads run together, for under the auspices of the state one small group makes the fundamental decisions that Switzerland confronts in the international economy." But how can this be, since the state in question is democratic, and especially since the Permanent Economic Delegation's decisions are subsequently submitted to the general public by referendum? Katzenstein (ibid.) notes without comment that the public infrequently takes advantage of its veto power: "incursions of the public into the interlocking corridors of power are very rare in the area of foreign economic policy . . . normally, then, the close cooperation between peak associations, the state bureaucracy, and the government is not challenged by the public in the area of foreign economic policy."

In principle, no matter how powerful the Swiss army or how inventive the Swiss bureaucracy is, the Swiss state's autonomy should

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vanish to the extent that Switzerland is democratic. Certainly once government actions are subjected to referenda, there should be no space left for state autonomy, regardless of how effective the state is in dreaming up policies or in implementing those that survive public scrutiny. Does this mean that state theory is inapplicable to democratic governments? The editors of *Bringing the State Back In* suggest as much, writing that "strong popular demands and social exigencies" (Evans et al. 1985b, 364)—not "sheer sovereign integrity[,] the stable administrative-military control of a given territory . . . loyal and skilled officials and plentiful financial resources" (Skocpol 1985, 16)—are responsible for "continuing expansions of state activities in the economies and the social life of both developed and developing nations" (Evans et al. 1985b, 364).

Does democratic control really spell the irrelevance of the notion of state autonomy to modern government? Does the advent of mass politics automatically consign state theory to the dustbin of premodern history?

Not if mass democratic control of the state is more an ideal than a reality. And that is exactly what is suggested by research on public opinion, which shows most fundamentally that the public's knowledge of politics and government is so rudimentary that the people who are allegedly in control are not even aware of most of what modern governments do (Somin 1998).

Public ignorance of what the vast modern state is doing may well give state officials room to pursue their own interests and ideals (Friedman 1997, 456). This freedom of maneuver would not rely principally on the state's ability to suppress challenges to its monopoly on domestic violence, which would in any case tend to be quelled in advance by the stamp of legitimacy conferred on modern states by their democratic credentials. Rather, the key source of democratic states' ability to act autonomously would be public unawareness of state actions. (Is it realistic to think that the Swiss public really understood the state initiatives it approved by referendum?) Indeed, the expansive organizational and resource capabilities available to modern states may be a *consequence*, not a *precondition*, of modern states' autonomy, if public ignorance is what first allows the nominally democratic state to escape effective societal scrutiny. Public ignorance, then, may be the crucial variable responsible for the expansion of modern states' power and, as well, for their their freedom to use it.

Although the public is usually ignorant of the most basic political in-

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formation, sustained media attention can occasionally cut through the public's ignorance and provide society a means of monitoring state policies. Ilya Somin argues below, however, that such control over state actors can be deflected if state elites successfully manipulate public opinion to conform to their own preferences. Given "the state's" manipulation of public preferences, even if "society" becomes aware of policy alternatives, the state can checkmate society's *de jure* electoral control over public policy.

Earl Ravenal argues below that the foreign-policy process is essentially liberated from societal control by virtue of the public's attention only to the visible side-effects of foreign policy: casualties and, indirectly, expenditures. The American foreign-policy establishment, at least, tries to create policies that will meet policy goals effectively not because otherwise it faces public disapproval, but because otherwise, the formulators of the policy will face the disapproval of their peers. Even more disturbing for democratic ideals, Reihan Salam suggests that states actively form the ethnic identities of the members of society. Salam argues that national and ethnonational identities are often the product of state actions during periods of nation formation. Salam contends that people's ignorance of their true interests is the result. In Salam's view, ethnic identities need to be seen as yet another realm of state influence, one that is just as open to manipulation and state-induced creation as any other.

Are there institutional constraints that are more effective than public opinion in blocking autonomous state actions? One possibility is interest groups, whose closer proximity to government and higher levels of attentiveness may enable them to constrain state actors. Several prominent economic approaches to politics contend that interest groups or interested economic actors may be able to "capture" the very regulatory agencies that were intended to alter and monitor their actions.

However, Rogan Kersh, Anthony Woodlief, and Steven Sheffrin argue below that it is more by assumption than by demonstration that economic approaches to politics reduce political acts as disparate as voting behavior and government regulation to the self-interest of social actors. Sheffrin shows that state and federal regulatory policy in the United States often fails to conform to the theory of interest-group capture. Instead, Sheffrin argues, regulations are just as likely to be the product of satisficing corporate behavior, voters' pursuit of their conception of the common good, or state actors' ideologically inspired goals. Using the push for deregulation beginning in the 1970s as a

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prime example, Sheffrin argues that autonomous state elites often drive policy in a manner that economistic theories would not seem to allow.

In his review of Sam Peltzman's *Political Participation and Government Regulation*, Anthony Woodlief expresses admiration for the unusually high level of realism Peltzman brings to the economic analysis of politics. However, Woodlief contends that political scientists' focus on noneconomic motivations may provide an even more accurate understanding of political processes. Woodlief argues that the unrealistic assumptions made in economists' analyses of political phenomena generate formally elegant models of politics that tell us little about actual state decisions. He joins Sheffrin in directing attention to the role that personal convictions may play in even the decisions of legislators who are supposed to be the state personnel most responsive to public sentiment.

On the other hand, Kersh shows that interest groups are often too ignorant of legislative activity to form an opinion about what they want the state to do; and that even when an interest group does have an opinion, the superior knowledge possessed by the group's lobbyists may allow them to betray their employer, effectively turning the lobbyists into agents of policy directions that run counter to the group's demands. The close relationships between professional lobbyists and state actors may mutually reinforce their autonomy from their societal "clients."

* * *

As the articles in this issue suggest, public ignorance may open a gap between democratic theory and political reality that allows us to bring the state back into the analysis of modern states. The democratic features of modern states—regularly occurring elections and the resulting attention political elites pay to public opinion—can, in the rare case when an issue grabs public attention, constrain state action. However, the pervasive informational deficits that afflict the electorate suggest that this constraint is rather weak. Given the public's political ignorance, it is likely that the states governing modern democracies are far more autonomous from social actors than is commonly assumed. Bringing the mass public's ignorance into studies of state autonomy extends the scope of Skocpol et al.'s project by offering a new way to understand how states can act autonomously, even in democratic societies. The papers in this volume barely scratch the surface. How and when the bureaucrats, politicians, and judges who

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compose the modern state use their power autonomously, and the extent to which this is made possible by the largely illusory aura of democratic accountability that surrounds their actions, are topics to which these pages only begin to do justice.

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Samuel DeCanio

BRINGING THE STATE BACK IN . . . AGAIN

ABSTRACT: *Previous scholarship on states' autonomy from the interests of society has focused primarily on nondemocratic societies, raising the question of whether "state theory" is relevant to modern states. Public-opinion research documenting the ignorance of mass polities suggests that modern states may be as autonomous as, or more autonomous than, premodern states. Premodern states' autonomy was secured by their ability to suppress societal dissent by force of arms. Modern states may have less recourse to overt coercion because the very thing that legitimates them in the eyes of society—democracy—virtually ensures that society will not control the state, since the putative agent of control, the electorate, cannot possibly be well informed about the multitudinous tasks undertaken by modern governments. Instead of focusing solely on armies, taxes, and bureaucracies, state theorists can now direct their attention to how the vagaries of public opinion and the legitimating effects of popular elections may fuel state autonomy.*

Despite the efforts of several prominent scholars, the state remains neglected in the study of politics and society. This is the case even though the division of the world into sovereign states is still the most salient aspect of the modern political landscape. Modern states display widely different degrees of democratic legitimacy and political power; some have well-trained and -equipped military and police forces while others can barely exercise authority over their territories. All of them, how-

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Ilya Somin

DO POLITICIANS PANDER?

ABSTRACT: *In* Politicians Don't Pander, *Lawrence Jacobs and Robert Shapiro show that politicians follow public opinion much less slavishly than conventional wisdom suggests. However, the case studies they themselves rely on show that public opinion constrains policy makers more than they claim. Conversely, to the extent that political leaders are able to ignore the public's wishes, Jacobs and Shapiro do not adequately consider the possibility that this is due in large part to severe voter ignorance of public policy. In urging greater obedience to the popular will, the authors also overlook the danger that increased adherence to the often internally contradictory wishes of the electorate may be impossible or undesirable.*

Few complaints about American politics are more often heard than the claim that politicians pander excessively to the vicissitudes of public opinion. Our political leaders, assert pundits from across the political spectrum, are hamstrung by mindless adherence to the dictates of polls and campaign consultants who seek to follow the slightest mood swings of voters (Patterson 1994; Safire 1996; Lewis 1993; King 1997). Increasingly sophisticated methods for measuring and tracking public opinion are alleged to have exacerbated this tendency (Geer 1996). In their important recent work *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), political scientists Lawrence Jacobs and Robert Shapiro pose a formidable challenge to this conventional wisdom by examining two major episodes in recent American political history: the defeat of Presi-

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dent Bill Clinton's health-care plan in 1993–94 and the political failure of Newt Gingrich's Republican Congress in 1995–96.

Jacobs and Shapiro make an important contribution to our understanding of the interaction between public opinion and policy making. Yet their argument fails to take adequate account of the impact of voter ignorance on this interaction. Moreover, the ultimate defeat of the Clinton and Gingrich policy initiatives arguably reflects the existence of stronger public opinion-induced constraints on politicians than the authors are willing to concede.

Manipulation or Constraint?

Jacobs and Shapiro's most striking finding is that in formulating their policy proposals, both Clinton Democrats and Gingrich Republicans viewed public opinion as a target for manipulation rather than as a source of constraint. Instead of tailoring their policies to the dictates of the popular will, these leaders sought to manipulate the public into accepting proposals that they sought to enact for ideological and interest-based reasons. Moreover, Clinton, Gingrich, and their allies sought to swing public opinion in their favor not by persuading Americans based on the merits of reasoned and detailed arguments, but by using "crafted talk" to tap into inchoate feelings and biases that favored the proposal being put forward (106–108). As one Clinton aide put it during the health-care battle, the president and his advisers believed that they could "get away with anything provided you believe in something, you say it over and over again, and you never change" (106). Similarly, the Republicans thought that they could successfully sell their policies to the public so long as they could "stay on message" and "get everybody saying the same thing," as then-Republican National Committee Chairman Haley Barbour put it (273). Far from facilitating greater adherence to public opinion, survey research and other technical innovations were used to find ways to maneuver the public into supporting political leaders' and activists' own agendas (chs. 5–6).

Thus, the Clinton health-care proposal was put together with little or no attention to public preferences; instead, the administration sought to achieve its policy goal of cost containment, satisfy the demands of key Democratic-leaning interest groups, and win the support of members of Congress (95–103). In doing so, they rejected a number of policy options that had considerably more support in public-opinion sur-

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veys than those ultimately adopted (ibid.). The Republican 104th Congress likewise deliberately promoted several major policies—particularly on Medicare and environmental policy—that were known to be unpopular with large majorities of the general public (266–72).

These findings are particularly important in that both the Clinton health-care plan and the Republican Contract with America addressed highly prominent issues that were widely debated in the press. Earlier scholars have generally assumed that public opinion constraints on policymakers should be unusually strong in such cases, where the issues at stake are highly visible and salient (e.g., Arnold 1990; Somin 1998). Health-care policy was rated the number-one concern of the public in surveys taken in 1993–94, and the Republican effort to roll back "big government" posed a major challenge to the very heart of the contemporary American political economy. Jacobs and Shapiro contest the prevailing view on some of its strongest ground. If politicians are able to flout public opinion in these highly prominent cases, surely they are even more likely to do so with respect to the vast bulk of other policy decisions, many of which may escape public scrutiny almost entirely.

On the basis of the evidence gathered from their two cases, the authors conclude that the present American political system provides insufficient "responsiveness" to public opinion. The picture they paint is a major challenge to conventional wisdom, and even to some of their own well-known prior works—which portrayed a coherent, consistent public opinion able to exercise substantial influence over policy outcomes (Page and Shapiro 1992; Jacobs 1993). In *Politicians Don't Pander,* the authors are much less optimistic, and they propose that responsiveness be heightened by means of increased opportunities for citizen involvement in policy debates and improved press coverage of politicians' distance from "centrist" public opinion (chs. 9–10).

The Neglected Role of Voter Ignorance

Jacobs and Shapiro's conclusion, that politicians routinely ignore public opinion even on major, highly prominent policy issues, raises an obvious question: why don't voters punish these recalcitrant politicians at the polls? After all, aspiring rivals of incumbent politicians have every incentive to point out the incumbents' deviations from adherence to voter preferences.

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The most likely answer is that, in many cases, voters are simply unaware of what the politicians are doing. Decades' worth of survey research has shown that the majority of voters are unaware of even very basic political information, such as the key precepts of liberal and conservative ideology or the division of responsibilities between the three branches of government (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1991 and 1996; Somin 1998; Converse 1964 and 1975; Bennett 1988 and 1989; Smith 1989).

It is not surprising, therefore, that many people were, especially at first, unaware of the extent to which Clinton's and Gingrich's policy proposals differed from their preferences. To be sure, Clinton's and Gingrich's political opponents were quick to claim that they had adopted radical policies at odds with public opinion; such information cues from "opinion leaders" can galvanize opposition to policies at odds with majority preferences (Stimson 1990; Lupia and McCubbins 1998). But poorly informed voters cannot easily determine whether they should credit such self-serving opposition claims or, alternatively, accept the inevitable denials of the incumbents.[1]

One of Jacobs and Shapiro's most interesting findings is that both Democratic (101–102) and Republican (266–70) strategists perceived the general public as having low political knowledge and competence. They therefore concluded that popular preferences were a poor guide to public policy and easily subject to manipulation (101–102, 269–73). This pessimistic evaluation of the voting public is widely shared among American political elites of both major parties (Pew 1998). While such sentiments by political leaders may in part stem from self-serving elitism, they are supported by years of public-opinion research demonstrating extremely low levels of citizen knowledge.[2]

Voter ignorance created both opportunities and constraints for Clinton and Gingrich. On the one hand, as Jacobs and Shapiro point out, they offered political leaders the tempting prospect of shaping voter preferences to fit elite agendas. In an interesting case of borrowing from social-science research, both the Clinton Administration and the Republican Congress recognized that generally ignorant and inattentive voters could be "primed" into supporting policies that contained major elements that they opposed through carefully crafted messages that associated the policies with broadly supported goals and values (106, 271–74).[3] The more poorly informed voters are, the more vulnerable they are to manipulation by "priming" (Zaller 1992; Kinder and Sanders 1990; Iyengar and Kinder 1987).

While Jacobs and Shapiro deplore Clinton's and Gingrich's at-

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tempts at manipulation, they fail to adequately appreciate that such manipulation was in part a result of the severe constraints that voter ignorance impose on political leaders. Because most voters rarely if ever think carefully and systematically about their policy preferences, they often hold contradictory values and opinions (Zaller 1992; Bennett and Bennett 1990).[4] As Jacobs and Shapiro themselves note, majorities of voters in 1995–96 supported the Republicans' general goal of reducing the size and scope of government and balancing the budget, but simultaneously also opposed cuts in almost all major domestic policy programs (266–67).[5] Similarly, strong majorities supported the Clinton Administration's goals of universal access to health care and cost-containment, but opposed many of its specific proposals for expanding government control over medical care (95–100).

Although Jacobs and Shapiro note the existence of these internal contradictions in public opinion, they fail to consider the full extent of their significance. Quite simply, Clinton and Gingrich could not have followed the dictates of majority opinion even if they had wanted to do so. For they could not implement one set of public preferences without going against another, which would leave them politically vulnerable. For instance, the Republicans could reduce the size and scope of government or they could protect and expand all the major spending and regulatory programs that enjoy strong public support; but they could not possibly have done both. Faced with such dilemmas, even a leader more respectful of public opinion than Clinton or Gingrich might have been forced to resort to dissimulation to avoid political disaster.

In sum, voter ignorance provided opportunities for Clinton and Gingrich to implement agendas they and their partisan supporters favored, but also left them vulnerable to opinion backlash regardless of which policies they chose to adopt. Even worse—from Jacobs and Shapiro's standpoint—ignorance-induced internal contradictions in public opinion make it impossible for politicians to fully adhere to popular dictates even when they are willing to take the political risk that entails.

Constrained Constraints on State Autonomy

Jacobs and Shapiro's thesis that politicians systematically ignore "centrist public opinion" derives support from the initial content of Clinton's

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and Gingrich's policy agendas. Yet it should be remembered that many of the elements of their agendas most at odds with public opinion were eventually dropped even by the parties that initially proposed them. After the final defeat of the Clinton health plan in 1994, the Democratic party gave up trying to achieve comprehensive change of any kind in health-care policy, instead opting for modest incremental measures such as the Kennedy-Kassebaum Act. Likewise, since the defeat of Gingrich, followed by his eventual resignation in the wake of his equally unpopular support of President Clinton's impeachment, radical policy proposals emanating from the Republican Congress have been notable by their absence. Indeed, as Jacobs and Shapiro recount, President Clinton was able to outmaneuver the Republicans in 1995–96 in part by learning from his own earlier failures. Following the advice of political strategist Dick Morris,[6] the president deliberately positioned himself in the center, coopting those elements of the Republican agenda that had broad support in public opinion and forcefully opposing those that did not (277–91).

Obviously, these setbacks to Clinton's and Gingrich's unpopular initiatives cannot be considered to be simple triumphs of an active, alert centrist citizenry. Instead, as Jacobs and Shapiro point out, they owed much to the very sorts of political manipulation that Clinton and Gingrich had tried to use to build up support for their proposals in the first place. Moreover, the eventual outcomes of the two cases, while arguably more reflective of majority public opinion than Clinton's and Gingrich's original proposals, still deviated from public preferences substantially. In the health-care case, the widely supported goals of expanded coverage and cost containment were not achieved. Similarly, the price of giving up the more radical elements of Gingrich's agenda was the failure to achieve the widely supported goal of reducing the size and scope of the federal government.

It is not even clear that Clinton and Gingrich's initiatives were complete failures from the standpoint of their advocates. Although Republican conservatives failed to achieve their most ambitious goals, they did force President Clinton to accept a quite conservative welfare bill in 1996 and an accelerated balanced-budget plan in 1997. It is at least arguable that these compromises were more favorable to the Republicans than those that might have arisen if they had taken a less aggressive stance in 1995–96. President Clinton's health-care plan was arguably less productive of major policy changes than Gingrich's 1995 initiatives. Nonetheless, it may have paved the way for

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more modest liberal health-care legislation such as the Kennedy-Kassebaum Bill, and it certainly blocked conservative proposals that sought to reform health care by reducing the federal government's role rather than expanding it (Epstein 1997; Goodman and Musgrave 1993).

Even so, the two cases examined by Jacobs and Shapiro provide much more equivocal support for their thesis than they claim. After all, Clinton's and Gingrich's most unpopular proposals suffered defeat and their authors paid a substantial political price. Gingrich's later, equally unpopular support for Clinton's impeachment eventually led to the premature end of the House Speaker's political career in 1998. At the very least, the lesson that pundits and political strategists led by Clinton adviser Dick Morris drew from these two episodes was that flouting centrist public opinion poses severe risks for politicians. Morris's strategy of "triangulation" sought to reposition Clinton in the center precisely to avoid these risks (Morris 1999).

While Jacobs and Shapiro effectively demonstrate that politicians are far from being the slavish prisoners of opinion polls portrayed by many pundits, they arguably go too far in discounting the very real constraints that public opinion continues to impose on our leaders. In addition, they fail to consider the possibility that, to the extent that politicians *are* able to ignore the public's wishes, it may be a consequence of voter ignorance. Such voter ignorance not only allows politicians to ignore and manipulate the public's wishes; it also leads to contradictions that often make it all but impossible for political leaders to satisfy one public preference without frustrating others.

Finally, the existence of deep and widespread voter ignorance should lead us to question whether the increased "democratic responsiveness" to popular preferences that Jacobs and Shapiro advocate is actually desirable. While the authors argue that increased responsiveness will diminish public cynicism about and mistrust of government (ch. 9), this claim, even if correct, does not address the danger that close adherence to ill-informed public opinion might lead to disastrous, internally contradictory policies. Even so, Jacobs and Shapiro should not be blamed too greatly for failing to resolve this longstanding issue in political theory. *Politicians Don't Pander* remains a valuable contribution to our empirical knowledge of American politics even if we have reservations about the authors' normative stance. Future research can build on their work and shed further light on the extent

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to which politicians merely pander to the people's wishes or actively manipulate them.

NOTES

1. For a criticism of such opinion-leader models on the grounds that poorly informed voters have difficulty deciding which opinion leaders to trust, see Somin 1998 and Somin 1999.
2. For the most comprehensive survey of the evidence, see Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996.
3. For some of the more important social-science works on priming, see Iyengar and Kinder 1987 and Zaller 1992.
4. Such contradictions are to be differentiated from a situation where an individual knowingly values two opposed goals while recognizing the conflict between them. Most poorly informed voters, however, seem to be unaware of the conflicts among their different commitments (Zaller 1992), and this seems to have been the case with the two episodes discussed in *Politicians Don't Pander.*
5. This is part of a longstanding pattern of public opposition to "big government" in general combined with support for expanding most specific major government programs (Bennett and Bennett 1990; McCloskey and Zaller 1984).
5. For Morris's own account, see Morris 1999.

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David Ciepley

WHY THE STATE WAS DROPPED IN THE FIRST PLACE: A PREQUEL TO SKOCPOL'S "BRINGING THE STATE BACK IN"

ABSTRACT: *Around the time of World War II, just as the American state was acquiring new levels of capacity for autonomous action, the state was dropped from American social science, as part of the reaction to the rise of totalitarianism. All traces of state autonomy, now understood as "state coercion," were expunged from the image of American democracy. In this ideological climate, the "society-centered" frameworks of pluralism and structural-functionalism that Skocpol criticizes swept the field. Skocpol's call for a return to a Weberian understanding of the (potential) autonomy of government administrators may be complemented by a Weberian understanding of the (potential) autonomy of democratic leaders.*

Theda Skocpol began her famous programmatic essay, "Bringing the State Back In," by noting the short shrift "the state" had received at the hands of American social scientists in the 1950s and 60s, especially those working within the pluralist and structural-functionalist paradigms then dominant in political science and sociology. This cohort of social scientists had neglected in particular the "Weberian" point that organs of the state enjoy a measure of "autonomy" from the surrounding society that enables them to pursue policies and goals distinct from, and even at odds with, those demanded by society and its organized groups. They also neglected the "Tocquevillian" point that

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the structure and activity of a state influence the kind of external demands made upon it, as well as the structures of the groups and classes that make these demands (Skocpol 1985, 28).

Skocpol (1985, 6) argued further that inattention to state autonomy in the 1950s and 60s was not an historical aberration, but consonant with "proclivities present from the start in the modern social sciences."

> These sciences emerged along with the industrial and democratic revolutions of Western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their founding theorists quite understandably perceived the locus of societal dynamics—and of the social good—not in outmoded, superseded monarchical and aristocratic states, but in civil society, variously understood as "the market," "the industrial division of labor," or "class relations."

There was, as Skocpol noted, plenty of evidence of state autonomy for social scientists to draw upon—colonial conquest, world wars, state-building revolutions, and political authoritarianism, for example. Indeed, in light of their own national histories, Continental Europeans, especially Germans, had "insisted on the institutional reality of the state and its continuing impact on and within civil society" (7). However,

> as long as capitalist and liberal Britain, and then capitalist and liberal America, could plausibly be seen as the unchallengeable "lead societies," the Western social sciences could manage the feat of downplaying the explanatory centrality of states in their major theoretical paradigms—for these paradigms were riveted on understanding modernization, its causes and direction. And in Britain and America, the "most modern" countries, economic change seemed spontaneous and progressive, and the decisions of governmental legislative bodies appeared to be the basic stuff of politics. (Ibid., 6.)

This is an insightful reading of the history of Western social science, at least in broad outline. While it may be unfair to accuse the pluralists and structural-functionalists of completely neglecting state autonomy, since they did emphasize the role of the state in totalitarian and economically developing countries, it is true that they minimized its autonomy in the Western democracies, and they thought of a minimally autonomous state as a norm toward which other societies ought to aspire. While Skocpol's general history of Anglophone social science passes over any number of important British theorists who cut against the grain, from

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Hobbes and Burke to the British Idealists and Hobhouse, hers is a fair rendering of the mainstream of British social science. And many European social scientists have indeed used the United States as a silver screen on which to project their image of the future, in which the absence of an autonomous state apparatus has been a persistent feature.

But the same cannot be said of American social scientists themselves, at least prior to World War II. Although many did see the United States in the vanguard of history, they certainly did not see it evolving into a "stateless" society, nor even into a society in which the state would be a marionette that moved its limbs only in response to the tug of external interests. Rather, American social scientists were drawn to German, state-centered frameworks from the very beginning. Thousands of the brightest and most ambitious American college graduates traveled to Germany in the final decades of the nineteenth century to pursue advanced studies in (what we would label today as) the areas of political science, economics, law, history, and sociology (Herbst 1965; Parrish 1967). The Americans were impressed not only by the high social status of German academics, but by their close connection to the state, both as advisors and as trainers of civil servants. They brought back from Germany both the state-centered thought patterns of the German Historical School and the ambition to institute a professional civil service on the German model, along with a network of graduate schools to train young men for this service.[1] Their intention to revolutionize American higher education was ultimately more successful than their aspiration to revolutionize American government; their graduates were more likely to find positions as university teachers, journalists, and social workers than as government servants; but "they kept alive the idea of a professional government service as part of the broader campaign for a trained leadership class" (Ross 1991, 70). Indeed, as we will see, the passage of time only increased their interest in the autonomy of the state, as they gave up on achieving social reform by directly educating the voting public and looked instead to possibilities for "social control" through the expert guidance of public affairs.

Of course, the importance of Skocpol's article lies not in the historical narrative it proffers, but in the analytical approaches it canvasses. Nevertheless, a more accurate rendering of the history of American social science presents us with a puzzle that merits solution: Why, in light of its "statist" beginnings, did the state suddenly drop out of American social science? More precisely, why was the

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state's capacity for autonomous action expunged from social-scientific treatments of American democracy? Answering this question advances Skocpol's research program in two ways: it highlights the artificiality of the turn away from the state as autonomous actor; and it draws attention to forgotten resources within the American social-scientific tradition for analyzing and evaluating the activities of states.

The Statist Origins of American Social Science

Opposition to the central state, or "big government," is a deeply rooted American idiom, cultivated by Thomas Jefferson and harvested by Andrew Jackson and his many successors. Of this there is no question. But while parts of America, especially the West, went over to Jackson, the universities remained firmly rooted in Whig political culture, with its predilection for elite guidance in the public interest. This was the soil in which American social science germinated.

The social-science disciplines proper began in an alliance between Whiggish university professors and gentry reformers, or "mugwumps," who sought to replace the corrupt politicians of the Gilded Age with the disinterested leadership of their own class. The American Social Science Association (ASSA), mother to all the more specialized professional organizations, "was founded in 1865 jointly by the scientific and university reformers and by gentry reformers at work in charity organizations, government, and politics" (Ross 1991, 63), with a broadly shared agenda of preserving America's liberal institutions, while reforming and adapting them to cope with the forces of industrialization, urbanization, and, later, immigration. ASSA's offspring, the various specialized social-science organizations, differed on strategy, but all carried forward this basic reformist orientation.

Political science and history were the most "conservative" disciplines, with the closest ties to Eastern Whig political culture and the mugwumps. The guiding spirit of early American political science was that of the German émigré Francis Lieber, the court political theorist of, first, the American Whig party, and then of the Republican party, who defended, in learned systematic treatises, a strong, though limited, national state, led by an aristocracy of merit. Theodore Dwight Woolsey, the president of Yale, and Daniel Coit Gilman, the president of Johns Hopkins, were both major promoters of Lieber's work. Woolsey's student, Andrew White, grabbed the reins

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at Cornell University in 1867 and founded a "School of Political Science" that propagated Lieber's approach (Ross 1991, 67). Among the notable scholars who were inspired by Lieber were Charles Kendall Adams at Michigan, John W. Burgess at Columbia, and Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins. All read Lieber, went to Germany to pursue advanced studies in history and *Staatswissenschaft*, and returned to preside over the founding of political-science departments in their respective universities. Their encounter with Lieber, with German historical and governmental science, and with the close relationship between the German universities and the German civil service, only confirmed their native inclinations. As Dorothy Ross (1991, 70) notes of this cohort of political scientists, "the mugwump program to develop a leadership class and an expert civil service was part of their professional as well as their class intention," which is another way of saying that augmenting the autonomy of the state was their professional and class concern.

These tendencies in academic political science were reinforced by the later stages in the evolution of Progressivism. At first, Progressivism was populist and egalitarian in orientation, and was frequently allied with the Social Gospel movement. Its strategy was, first, to publicize current abuses, so as to inform the popular will; and, second, to institute expanded democratic mechanisms (referendum, recall, and the direct election of Senators and existing legislative bodies) so as to empower the (informed) popular will—which, it was believed, was being stymied by a small economic and legal elite. Its call for greater democratic control was aimed at reducing the influence of "special interests" in government; but of course its strategy implied a reduction in state autonomy as well.[2] Later on, however, Progressivism became more elitist and scientistic. This form of Progressivism looked to experts staffing government administrations and agencies to cope with the era's social problems. While also directed against special interests, its upshot was to insulate the state from the popular will.

It is conventional to use World War I to mark the end of the Progressive era. Progressive hopes that the war experience would generate momentum for national and international "reconstruction" were dashed by the public's wartime jingoism and its evident desire for a return to "normalcy" after it. But while the war did end the populist strain of progressivism, it encouraged the expert strain. Charles Merriam, the standard-bearer for political science in the 1920s, exemplified the shift.

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> With the decline of Progressivism and the hysteria of the war years, even traditional Progressives like Merriam came to believe that democratic voters and leaders operated on a psychology of irrationalism. Walter Lippmann . . . turned sharply against the rational capacity of the people. In *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925), with wide approval among the social scientists, he offered an acid analysis of popular inattention, irrationality, and manipulability. Merriam never adopted Lippmann's harsh language or abandoned democracy. But the old Progressive faith in the educability of the people turned into the need for scientific techniques by which leaders could lead and the public could be trained into accepting the correct path. Science became increasingly a substitute for political prudence. (Ross 1991, 452–53.)

The loss of democratic faith was reflected in the changing nature of expert-Progressive reform proposals. Herbert Croly's *The Promise of American Life* (1909) was a seminal text in the development of expert-Progressivism. Croly's purgative for governmental corruption and incompetence was to concentrate power and responsibility in the hands of political executives, not to disperse or restrict it, as populist-Progressives desired (Croly 1989, 331). The federal structure of government should be retained, but at every level of government—local, state, and federal—the executive, as a public-spirited "Boss" (ibid., 340), should appoint and oversee an administrative staff of "expert public servants" (ibid., 336), removable at his pleasure. Meanwhile legislatures, especially state legislatures, should have their responsibilities streamlined and largely shifted to detail-oriented expert legislative committees, with the primary responsibility for legislative initiatives again coming from the executive (ibid., 315–33). The point was to increase the energy and efficiency of government. But Croly's executives were ultimately accountable to the electorate, and Croly as much as admitted that he had no good answer about what to do when voters elect incompetent and irresponsible executives (ibid., 337).

Despite his recognition of public ignorance, Croly's proposals required, in the end, a public intelligent enough to select wise government leaders. The next phase of expert-Progressivism sought to decouple administration from democratic accountability. It was the heyday of the independent governmental agency. Cass Sunstein (1987, 422–23) has nicely summarized the new mindset:

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> In the New Deal period, reformers believed that administrative officials would serve as independent, self-starting, technically expert, and apolitical agents of change. This basic understanding wedded the original constitutional belief in the need for an energetic national government to the desire, associated with the Progressive movement, to insulate public officials from partisan pressures in the service of a long-term public interest. The concept of autonomous administration, now under sharp attack, was originally the source of enormous optimism.[3]

A more explicit idealization of state autonomy is difficult to imagine.

Economics and Statism

The story of American political science up to World War II—a story of originary interest in state autonomy reinforced by the evolution of Progressivism—has its analogue in the history of economics. The hegemony enjoyed today by neoclassical economics, with its image of the self-propelling and self-regulating market, should not make us forget its long and losing struggle for converts against more statist rivals in the years prior to World War II. The professionalizing economists of the late nineteenth century were actually the most politically and economically radical of the social scientists, the most sympathetic to Christian and democratic socialism. Frequently of New England Protestant evangelical backgrounds, though sometimes of Midwestern, dissenting Protestant stock, they carried the millennial overtones of religious revivalism into the social sciences, and often joined in loose alliance with the Social Gospel movement on practical reform issues. But despite their radicalism, or because of it, their work pushed them in the same direction as that of the political scientists.

Early organizational leadership was provided by Richard T. Ely, a man of Christian socialist leanings who studied (statist) German historical economics under Wagner and Knies in Germany. In 1885, impressed by the use the historical economists made of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* to advance their reformist agenda, Ely organized the American Economics Association (AEA) from out of the ASSA. Gathering together sundry opponents of the doctrine of laissez-faire—Christian social reformers, economists and political scientists sympathetic to the German school, as well as older critics of social

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Darwinism and of classically trained economists—the AEA "issued a nonbinding statement of principles, which approved state economic action, called on economists to turn from the older 'speculative' economic methods to historical ones, and named the 'conflict of labor and capital' the central problem of modern economics" (Ross 1991, 110). Their organization helped them gain early professional advantage against the older generation of classically trained economists, and Ely's *Outline of Economics* became the most widely used economics textbook until the end of the Second World War (ibid., 409). Theodore Roosevelt, for one, claimed to have learned his economics from it (Ely 1938).

It should be noted that the demands of professionalization produced a fair amount of irenicism early on, and for a period the technical prowess and pedagogical advantages of the marginalist revolution in economist theory brought neoclassicism into the ascendant. Ely's textbook itself, repeatedly revised over its many editions, inched in a neoclassical direction, especially under the editorial assistance of Allyn Young.[4] But the apparent success of national economic planning during World War I, followed by the seeming failure of the market in 1929, brought back a new wave of state-centered economic thinking, mostly under the rubric of "institutionalism." As Lionel Robbins wrote in 1932, "in recent years, if [the institutionalists] have not secured the upper hand altogether, they have certainly had a wide area of power in America." Even those who maintained formal allegiance to classicism and neoclassicism accepted much of the institutionalist research agenda. As one commentator noted on the eve of American entry into World War II, theoretical discussion among economists was being dominated by the issues of macroeconomic crisis, monopoly, and planning. Whatever regard they officially maintained for Smith's "invisible hand," "judged by their choice of topics, economists seem to have given up any implicit unquestioning belief in the virtues of laissez-faire, and to some extent, even in the capitalist system" (Roll 1940, 448).

Unlike Marxists, who see the state eventually withering away; and unlike the neo-Marxist students of the state mentioned by Skocpol, who, while abandoning the notion of a stateless communist millennium, continue to see the state as an instrument of class domination or an arena of class struggle, the historical and institutional economists envisioned the state as a permanent feature of a mature capitalist economy, and as oriented toward the public good under the guidance

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of economic experts. This matched the evolution of Progressive thought, as hopes that the problems of industrialization and economic inequality could be solved simply by eliminating the "curse of bigness" gave way to a recognition that, in order to capture the productivity of new technology, corporate bigness would have to be tolerated, while its downsides could be moderated by a countervailingly large government exercising regulatory and redistributional functions.

Social and Legal Control

All the social-science disciplines were using the language of social control by the 1920s, but it was the sociologists who first gave the notion currency, and the evolution of its meaning within sociology is illustrative of the larger trends. Edward A. Ross's *Social Control* (1901) did much to bring the term into widespread use throughout the social sciences. In fleshing out the notion, Ross, an economist turned sociologist, laid emphasis upon the multifarious and inadvertent socializing mechanisms (family, custom, church, schools, discussion, science, etc.) that bent individual feelings and ideas toward the social interest, thereby helping solve the problem of social order. But Ross also mixed in a more instrumentalist meaning of "social control" that was gaining usage among social reformers advocating the public control of private capitalist monopolies, on the one hand, and on the other hand sociologists interested in using their new science to direct social reforms (Dorothy Ross 1991, 236 and 249).

Recognizing the controversial nature of such instrumental knowledge in a democratic society, Ross warned that

> the secret of order is, therefore, not to be bawled from every housetop. . . . The social investigator . . . will venerate the moral system too much to uncover its nakedness. He will speak to men, not to youth. He will address himself to those who administer the moral capital of society; to teachers, clergymen, editors, lawmakers, and judges, who wield the instruments of control; to poets, artists, thinkers, and educators, who are the guides of the human caravan. (Quoted in Dorothy Ross 1991, 251.)

The instrumentalist meaning of social control was still subordinate in Ross's 1901 work. But the same democratic disappointments that transferred the hopes of political scientists to experts also shifted the empha-

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sis of sociologists from diffuse, unconscious forms of social control to centralized, conscious versions. The image of a diffuse "moral-educational regime" gave way to a more deliberate, technocratic image of social control by experts acting in and through governmental bodies (Dorothy Ross 1991, 253 and 428–37).

The story unfolded similarly in American legal thought. Critical of the Supreme Court's practice of striking down, in the name of "freedom of contract" and "fault-based liability," Progressive legislation such as minimum-wage and maximum-hour laws, collective bargaining by unionized workers, and workers' compensation, legal realists attacked the formalist (deductive) mode of legal reasoning the Court used to justify its decisions. Judicial discretion, the realists argued, is often present—in the view of the more extreme realists, including Jerome Frank, Herman Oliphant, Hessel Yntema, and Felix Cohen, it is *always* present—in the selection and interpretation of a legal rule to be applied to a given case; and in closing this gap, substantive considerations necessarily come into play, even if unconsciously.

Since the legal realists believed judicial discretion to be inevitable, their complaint was not that the Court was using it, but that it was using it to advance reactionary politics rather than the public weal, as this might be fathomed from social scientists' analysis of social problems. Over time, the realists' deference to social science turned into a call for judges to themselves serve as what Roscoe Pound, the Harvard Law School dean (who founded legal realism's forerunner, "sociological jurisprudence"), called "social engineers."

Felix Frankfurter, the imposing legal scholar and future Supreme Court justice, followed in Pound's footsteps. A fellow traveler of the legal realists, Frankfurter's early realism, like that of so many others, was fired by the hope that exposing the element of freedom in judicial decision making would encourage judges to look to scientifically trained experts for guidance. By the 1930s, however, Frankfurter began to think of the ideal judge as himself an expert, and imagined for him a remarkably elevated role in America's constitutional democracy—the role of "judicial statesman." "In simple truth," he wrote, "the difficulties that government encounters from law do not inhere in the Constitution. They are due to the judges that interpret it. . . . That document has ample resources for imaginative statesmanship, if judges have imagination for statesmanship" (quoted in Silverstein 1984, 80).

By the 1930s, then, all the social sciences were looking to disinter-

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ested political leadership and scientific expertise—in short, to state autonomy—as the answer to the multi-sided crisis of American democracy. Moreover, starting in the First World War, and much more so during the New Deal and World War II, American social scientists became part of the autonomous state themselves, helping staff the mushrooming governmental agencies that undertook massive programs of employment, information collection and dissemination, materials procurement, rationing, strategizing, and a host of other activities, all in the name of the national interest. If organized interest groups had some influence over how these programs were implemented, they were but backseat drivers compared to the combined forces of executive leadership and independent agency planning.

Therefore it is all the more striking that by mid century, after several generations of increasing interest among American social scientists in the possibilities of autonomous state action, and precisely when the reality of state autonomy should have been most glaringly obvious to American social scientists—because they were surrounded by its activities as never before, and indeed were themselves often a part of it—American social scientists abandoned the topic. It is as if a long period of accelerating speciation ended suddenly in a mass extinction.

There is no evidence that the dearth of state-centered studies in the postwar period was the result of a grand conspiracy on the part of American social scientists to conceal their newfound power in the halls of government. Rather, the rise of "totalitarianism" seems to have been the cataclysmic event that wiped out the many species of "statism." Faced with the new and increasingly terrifying regimes of Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union, American intellectuals rallied to the defense of American democracy by invidiously comparing it to totalitarianism. As a result, the autonomy of the "democratic state" was dropped from view.

The Ideological Reaction against Totalitarianism

Even before the military engagements of World War II had begun, intellectuals in the liberal democracies had formulated their practical opposition to fascism, Nazism, and Communism in terms of a political antithesis. First, they cobbled together a new category of political regime—"totalitarianism"—designed to capture an essence common to

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the new European states. Then they reinterpreted democracy as its polar opposite. Totalitarianism became the photographic negative that fixed, and in many respects continues to fix, the self-image of the Western democracies.[5]

Despite the European origins of both the term totalitarianism, and the phenomena it means to capture, nowhere did the concept of totalitarianism receive as wide circulation, or take on as much significance, as in the United States. Indeed, the dichotomy between individual freedom and totalitarianism has arguably been the ruling dichotomy of postwar public discourse. Just as "Jacobinism" was invoked in the nineteenth century to ward off the excesses of individualism, "fascism" has been invoked to scare off restraints on opinion, and "communism" (the other face of totalitarianism) has been invoked to scare off restraints on freedom of contract. The net effect has been to swing American public discourse in a strongly (albeit unrigorously) libertarian direction.

For example, in economics, the definition of Americanism as the polar opposite of fascism and communism gave laissez-faire conceptions of economic order a new lease on life. As fate would have it, Hitler and Roosevelt rose to power in the same year—a fact that encouraged comparison of their programs for economic recovery. Predictably enough, critics of New Deal economic programs began to denounce Roosevelt as a would-be totalitarian dictator (Lifka 1988, chs. 1–2). Of course, there had always been resistance, especially in business quarters, to greater public control of the economy, but among intellectuals, and even among neoclassical economists, there had been growing sympathy toward experimentation with a variety of state economic controls, even while full-blown socialism was avoided. But the fear of totalitarianism became the great simplifier. The dichotomous thinking of the age brought into circulation the extreme position of Hayek and other émigrés from the Austrian school of economics, who argued that any economic control by the state must, through an inexorable social logic, eventuate in totalitarian control of the whole society. It was all or nothing. While these views were at the outer edge of American opinion, Americans almost without exception, including most former Progressives, emerged from the war with a much more sympathetic view of private property and "free" enterprise (Skotheim 1971, ch. 4). It was the ideological opposition between free and totalitarian economies, more than any great failure of American economic planning during wartime, that brought

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an end to American flirtation with forms of economic corporatism and syndicalism. At the same time, the schools of economics—neo-Marxist, historical, and institutionalist—that had once advocated corporatism and syndicalism were marginalized.

The opposition to totalitarianism also led to the rediscovery of America's civil liberties tradition (which, it is usually forgotten, had been eclipsed by the nineteenth-century apotheosis of majority rule, by the common law's defense of local "police powers," and by the Progressive emphasis on the public interest over individual interests).[6] In response to the totalitarian tar brush just described, defenders of Roosevelt's economic programs, including Roosevelt himself, while rejecting the imputation that they were imposing totalitarian economic controls, searched for a different plane on which to contrast American democracy and totalitarianism. What they seized upon were civil liberties. If fascism meant state control of mass communication, America stood for freedom of speech and of the press; if fascism meant persecution of religion, America stood for freedom of religion; if fascism meant the restriction of public gatherings and of the movement of peoples, America stood for freedom of association and freedom of movement. And the most challenging contrast of all: if fascism meant racism, America stood for racial and ethnic harmony and cooperation.

These values, always more prominent in the writings of European classical liberals and radicals than in the practice of American democracy, were now touted as the very essence of America. Expressive of this change, in 1941 the Roosevelt administration celebrated with great fanfare the 150th anniversary of the Bill of Rights—an anniversary that had gone unremarked in 1841 and 1891 (Foner 1998, 163 and 217). Shortly thereafter, the Supreme Court, now dominated by Roosevelt men, began to issue opinions (themselves saturated with the freedom/totalitarianism dichotomy) "incorporating" the Bill of Rights through the Fourteenth Amendment, so that its protections would apply not just against the actions of the federal government, but those of state governments as well.

In addition to structuring public rhetoric, the freedom/totalitarianism dichotomy—or a common variant of it, the democracy/totalitarianism dichotomy—was adopted by a broad range of American social scientists and legal scholars as an analytic framework for the classification and evaluation of governmental systems, social systems, even entire "cultures."[7] From the late 1930s through the 1960s especially,

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these dichotomies structured reflection about politics, economics, law, psychology, education, foreign affairs, and most every other domain of social life.

"Totalitarianism" vs. "Democracy"

In tracing the impact of totalitarianism upon the social sciences, and political science in particular, two developments are of central importance. One, which can be treated quite quickly, is the emergence of the democracy/totalitarianism dichotomy as the organizing principle for discussion of political systems, and for comparative work in particular.

The systematic, empirical comparison of governmental systems was a latecomer to American political science, probably on account of the lingering influence of natural-law frameworks. When textbooks in comparative government did begin to appear, in the early 1930s, they provided little in the way of theoretical integration, with individual chapters devoted to separate nations in no particular order. The advent of totalitarianism gave impetus to comparative work, and at the same time gave it its organizing principle. By the late 1930s, comparativists, particularly European émigrés, had developed a synthetic concept of totalitarianism, describing what was common among communism, fascism, and Nazism, as well as what distinguished these regimes from traditional forms of dictatorship. Especially important for the development of this synthesis was a focus on the similarity of *means* employed by the dictatorships of the Left (Communism) and Right (fascism and Nazism), and the notion that these new regimes were qualitatively different from dictatorships of the past in their employment of modern technologies of communication and control. By the end of the decade, typical textbooks used chapters on Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union to contrast "totalitarianism" with Western democracies (Lifka 1988, 22 and 102).

The precise content of this contrast varied over time, however, which brings us to the second development of central importance to postwar political science: the transformation of the ideal of value-neutral science into the ideal of a value-neutral, noncoercive political-constitutional order. To impose values is absolutist and totalitarian; the only legitimate authority, by contrast, is one that provides a neutral framework for the brokering of value-claims, or "interests." Legitimate authority is relativistic by virtue of being democratic. This was

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the version of the democracy/totalitarianism dichotomy that pushed the autonomy of the "democratic" state into hiding, and that carried the antistatist paradigms of pluralism and structural-functionalism to their position of dominance.

Democracy and the American Methodenstreit

To understand the genesis and appeal of the value-neutral political-constitutional ideal, we must turn to the academic debates of the 1930s and 40s over scientific methodology and democratic values. The charged intellectual atmosphere in the American academy during these years has been wonderfully reconstructed by Edward Purcell in a neglected classic, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory* (1973). As Purcell shows, totalitarianism overtook Europe and Asia at a time when American academics were deeply divided over methodology in the social sciences and jurisprudence. On one side stood "scientific naturalists," including the younger generation of legal realists, who, whether under the influence of neo-Kantianism, positivism, or Darwinism, rejected the idea that ethical propositions could be rationally demonstrated, and who advocated replacing such exercises with empirical, "value-free" studies of the way in which politics, the law, and other social phenomena "really work." Squared off against them were "rational absolutists" such as Robert Maynard Hutchins, Mortimer Adler, and numerous Catholic intellectuals, who, as part of a renaissance of Thomism and natural-law theory, held that human reason could discover universal principles of justice through philosophical analysis of the nature of reality. The rise of fascism brought this methodological quarrel to a head by convincing each side that the fate of Western democracy depended upon routing its methodological opponent.

Initially, it was the scientific naturalists who found themselves on the defensive. This is hardly surprising when it is recollected that many of them, and perhaps Walter Lippmann preeminently, had spent the 1920s and early 30s reducing traditional democratic theory to a shambles. As Purcell (1973, 11–12) puts it, in a passage worth quoting at length:

> Between the first decade of the twentieth century and the mid-thirties the methods and assumptions of scientific naturalism helped expose major weaknesses in traditional democratic theory. First, it destroyed

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rational justifications of ethical ideals, such as a "higher law," which had provided democratic theory with its moral foundations. In the years after 1910 scientific naturalists strictly confined induction to observable, concrete phenomena and ruled it out as a method of proving the validity of any moral principles. At the same time they sharply redefined the nature of deductive logic, always closely allied with rational ethical systems. By demonstrating its wholly abstract and formal nature, scientific naturalists denied it any authority in questions concerning the legitimacy of moral values. Rejecting the possibility of demonstrating the truth of ethical propositions by either induction or deduction, they left moral ideals without a rational, theoretical basis. Second, in empirically examining human behavior and the actual process of American politics, scientific naturalists came to question and often reject three cardinal principles of democratic government: the possibility of a government of laws rather than of men, the rationality of human behavior, and the practical possibility of popular government itself. Legal scholars began to argue that judicial decisions were not the results of impartial logic but of the personal values of judges. There was no such thing as "established" law. Psychologists found that human behavior was largely irrational, especially in the complicated and emotional arena of politics. Most individuals, they maintained, were unable to fulfill the traditional democratic obligations of the citizen. Students of politics learned that in practice small groups of insiders dominate the government and that popular control was an illusion. Democratic government simply did not work as its theory claimed it should. By the early thirties traditional democratic theory seemed largely untenable.

Most scientific naturalists continued to believe in the desirability of democracy, and some tried to reformulate its theory. But the rise of European totalitarianism and the international political tensions of the late thirties transformed the problem of the validity of democratic theory into an unavoidable and essential question. The disillusionment of some intellectuals with naturalism, the hostility of church groups, and the frustrations created by the depression combined with the rise of Nazism to galvanize many Americans into a renewed attack on scientific naturalism as a destructive and inadequate world view.

The most basic charge leveled at the naturalists was that their work assumed, and intentionally or unintentionally propagated, moral relativism, the logical implication of which was that "that which is, is right"; and that it was on this value skepticism that totalitarianism fed. For neo-Scholastics such as Fr. Francis E. Lucey, regent of the

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Georgetown University School of Law, the lines of battle were clear: "Democracy *versus* the Absolute State means Natural Law *versus* Realism" (quoted in Purcell 1973, 168).

Relativistic Democracy vs. Absolutist Totalitarianism

Such rationalist-absolutist polemics by and large accorded with the sentiments of the general public during the war. But within academe, the scientific naturalists were able to turn the tables on the absolutists; and they did so in grand pragmatist style, shifting the terms of debate from the question of the logical implications of a theory to that of its social consequences.

John Dewey (1954 and 1957) had been arguing for decades that democracy was the political correlate of the "experimental attitude" in science.[8] By the late 1930s, he was emphasizing the converse as well—that political absolutism was the practical correlate of philosophical absolutism, since the pretense of eternal verities licensed a caretaker elite (Dewey 1939). The claim resonated, given that most academics carried with them a hazy Enlightenment historical consciousness that associated the "authoritarianism" of the medieval Church with Scholastic "dogmatism," and that furthermore gave them the vague sense that the advent of modern experimental science had at least something to do with the democratization of the West. Although few adopted Dewey's optimism that the "experimental method" could found a new science of values, they did rally behind the dichotomy he drew between political and philosophical absolutism on one side and political and philosophical openness on the other.

Totalitarianism, as now construed by the naturalists, was the reflex of moral absolutism: it stood for the imposition, by an individual or group, of one set of values on everyone else. Such a definition allowed scientific naturalists to condemn totalitarianism, and praise democracy, without taking any "substantive" value position. It made totalitarianism objectionable as a *procedure* of governance, regardless of the *content* of the values it imposed—objectionable because, normative proofs being impossible, the imposition of values can never be justified, whatever they are. This viewpoint brought with it a pluralistic interpretation of democracy as the photographic negative of totalitarianism. Democracy is the social form that results from accepting

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the relativity of all value positions and is characterized by diversity, change, voluntarism, and compromise.

The result was what Purcell aptly dubs the "relativist theory of democracy," the central claim of which was that, in the words of Thomas Vernor Smith, "democracy does not require, or permit, agreement on fundamentals" (Smith 1942, 124; quoted in Purcell 1973, 209).[9] Indicative of the new understanding is the *volte face* of Carl J. Friedrich, the eminent constitutional historian and comparativist, who in 1937 was still defending Sir Arthur Balfour's classic formulation that democracy was possible only where citizens agreed on fundamental values, but who by 1939 suggested that "it seems highly questionable whether fundamental agreement, or the absence of dissent in matters of basic significance is really a necessary or even a desirable condition for a constitutional democracy. . . . May it not be that modern constitutional democracy is the endeavor precisely to organize government in such a way that agreement on fundamentals need not be secured?" (Friedrich 1939, 571–73; quoted in Purcell 1973, 213–14).

The new gospel quickly spread to the four corners of academia. "Democracy then becomes identified with this principle of relativity, as contrasted with the absolutism of dictatorships," wrote Boyd M. Bode of Ohio State. "There is no middle ground" (Bode 1937, 48; quoted in Purcell 1973, 210). The nondemonstrability of ethical propositions was no longer seen as a logical blow to democracy, but as its pragmatic justification; and democratic relativism now threw jibes at "Adlerian authoritarianism" (Purcell 1973, 203).

> Dewey's equation of philosophical absolutism with political authoritarianism proved the linchpin of the developing relativist theory of democracy because it provided the one basis on which most American intellectuals could unite. It was grounded on a thorough naturalism; it required the acceptance of no specific ethical theory or philosophical system; and, best of all, it claimed that rational and religious absolutism was the real enemy of democracy. In short the absolutist-authoritarian equation appealed to all of the intellectual and emotional convictions of a great number of American scholars and at the same time allowed them to defend both naturalism and democracy by aligning their absolutist critics with European totalitarianism. (Ibid., 202.)

Moral absolutists, it now appeared, were but totalitarians in waiting. Moral skeptics were the true democrats.

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In view of their conviction that value disagreements are rationally irresolvable, the new theorists of democracy were more apt to trace their lineage to the "tough-minded" Justice Holmes than to the "tender-hearted" Professor Dewey—hence the tendency to read the neutrality ideal back into Holmes himself. But in truth it was only at the onset of World War II that American intellectuals conjured, as a reverse image of European totalitarianism, a picture of American democracy as shorn of shared value commitments. And what is more, they held this image up as a societal ideal. Stated baldly, an ideal of value-neutral science had been translated into an ideal of a value-neutral political-constitutional order—or at least, of a political-constitutional order in which values are not imposed on anyone.

This was a remarkable piece of ideological thaumaturgy. Max Weber, as an early proponent of value-neutral (*wertfrei*) social science, described value commitments (including his own) as a matter of "faith." Neither he nor his contemporaries would have dreamed of such a thing as a value-neutral political order. When Weber advocated democracy for Germany, he did so on the ground that it was the political form most likely to select charismatic yet responsible leaders capable of preserving the nation against the disintegrating forces of market competition, and of "elevating" the national character, by winning the public over to a *common* politicocultural faith.[10] Nor was the United States lacking intellectuals in the Weberian mold. Justice Holmes, in particular, spoke of politics as a matter of "fighting faiths." Yet remarkably, over the course of World War II, American social scientists and legal scholars translated the Weberian ideal of value-neutral science into an ideal of a value-neutral political-constitutional order, and they recast America as the embodiment of this ideal.

On a considered view, this must be judged an overdrawn ideological reaction to the situation in Europe. The horrors of Nazism, for example, came from the content of the values it cultivated (its racism, its militarization of society, its claim to world domination) and from the means it employed to cultivate them (state monopoly of all media, violent elimination of all dissent, denial of the right to exit, etc.), not from its cultivation of values *per se*. The association of values with authoritarianism also forgets that the institutional forms of liberal civilization have classically been justified on account of their capacity to foster various human virtues and secure various human goods.[11] It confuses the classical-liberal dissociation of citizenship from religious confessionalism with disengagement from substantive values (includ-

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ing religious values) *in general*. Furthermore, it does not actually follow from value skepticism that the imposition of values is unjustifiable. To conclude so overlooks the other edge of the sword—the edge emphasized by the rational absolutists—that moral skepticism undermines the reasons one might adduce as to why a given set of values *shouldn't* be imposed. If there is no truth about values, then why refuse those offered by the authorities? Put another way, if we are skeptical of all values, then it is not clear why we should accept the *normative* proposition that, lacking proof for a value position, the state *ought not* encourage it. Moral skepticism is consistent with state neutrality, absolutism, or anything in between.

Confused or not, the new neutralist idea of democracy became the guiding light of American intellectuals after the war. As Gary Peller (1988, 585–86) nicely puts it,

> In the period immediately after the Second World War, [the relativist theory of democracy] defined for mainstream American intellectuals their roles as intellectuals and, more generally, their conception of the difference between freedom and domination. Within this self-understanding, standing for liberty and freedom against the forces of domination and oppression represented by fascism specifically meant not taking a stand on substantive issues of politics and the distribution of social power. Intellectuals would respect the boundary between knowledge and politics by a steadfast value-neutrality, refusing to privilege one belief structure over another. Through the interpretation that linked European fascism (and later communism) to philosophical absolutism, they imagined that the preservation of liberty and freedom depended on ensuring that no substantive vision of truth or justice would be favored.

The famous postwar debate over the "end of ideology" was indicative of the new outlook. "Ideology" referred to all totalizing ("absolutist") social philosophies, and the question was whether Americans had succeeded in ridding themselves of them. Whether one believed they had or not, most agreed it would be a good thing.[12]

The debate over totalitarianism carved the broad channel in which all the mainstream intellectual developments of postwar U.S. legal and social scientific thought have run. Paradoxically, it *moralized* the skeptical position that the propagation of one conception of the good over another can never be rationally justified by associating the opposite position, ethical absolutism, with totalitarianism. As Gabriel Al-

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mond put it in 1954, "Once involved in the struggle for political power, the ethical absolutist is confronted by the most serious temptation," the temptation to impose his philosophy by totalitarian means (Almond 1954, 374; quoted in Purcell 1973, 238). At the same time, it *constitutionalized* this skepticism in the conviction that, in a proper liberal polity, the major constitutional arenas—politics, economics, and law—neither impose, nor presuppose, agreement on fundamental values. To quote Friedrich again, "Since certainly dictatorship of the modern totalitarian variety, and perhaps a good many other forms of government require such agreement on fundamentals, constitutional democracy is possibly the only form of government which does not require such agreement" (quoted in Purcell 1973, 214).

This set of intellectual commitments was not shared by all Americans; indeed, its initial carriers were a fairly small group of academic elites. Much of the rest of the country attributed the evils of fascism and communism to their godlessness and retained a more traditional understanding of America as a (Christian, or at least Judeo-Christian) God-fearing nation, with freedoms under moral law.[13] Nevertheless, the impact of the relativist framework was felt in every area the academic elites touched, and was indirectly propagated in ever-widening circles. Its impact was felt most immediately in a retheorization of the principal social sciences along lines consistent with relativist premises.[14]

The Proceduralist State

The ideal of "state neutrality" is perhaps the most obvious offspring of the relativist framework. Despite widespread opinion to the contrary, state neutrality was not a classical-liberal ideal, but a postwar American intellectual ideal.[15] Nevertheless, the rise of the neutrality ideal falls outside our present story. It didn't reach critical mass until the 1970s, and furthermore, it has been the preserve of political philosophy and allied fields and has not produced anything approaching an analytical framework usable for empirical comparative research. But for what it is worth, including it would only confirm our story. Talk of the neutral state may "bring the state back in," but only after the state has been shorn of all value orientations—which is to say, shorn of all real autonomy. Indeed, the literature on state neutrality has really focused upon

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principles of social justice. The state that would be needed to administer them has received almost no attention.

Our story, instead, concerns the new analytic frameworks for empirical research that rose to prominence in the immediate postwar decades in the climate of democratic relativism: democratic (as opposed to value) pluralism and structural-functionalism. These frameworks are best understood as part of a broad intellectual current that swept through American history and social science in the immediate postwar decades as historians and social scientists tried to resolve questions raised by the new relativist understanding of democracy. Perhaps the greatest puzzle was that of social order. Namely, if democratic citizens don't share fundamental value commitments, then what keeps society from falling apart into the war of all against all? How does society go on? "Consensus theory" is the historian's label for a family of postwar social-scientific theories that provided solutions to this puzzle.

The leading assumption of consensus theory was not, as the name might suggest, that democratic citizens agree upon fundamental values, but rather that, despite disagreement on values, Americans agree on the procedures for settling disagreements, and agree to accept as binding the outcome of these procedures. In other words, they enjoy a consensus on the proper means for deciding otherwise irresolvable disputes. Consensus theory thus provides a different, more modest, kind of accommodation to relativist premises than does neutralism. Consensus theory does not demand that public policy be neutral with respect to substantive values (although it does ask that the policy-making process be open to competing value claims, and that political actors generally hold a skeptical attitude toward values, especially toward "totalistic" value systems). Rather, consensus theory accommodates value pluralism by arguing that a society may do without agreement on fundamental values so long as there is a common allegiance to the *process* by which (value-laden) decisions are made. Reason is instrumental—value conflict is not rationally resolvable—but, at least in America, conflict is contained within a consensus on how to carry on when faced with disagreement: through voting, bargaining, compromise, accommodation, and coexistence. It was not even necessary to assume that this consensus had been brought by the majority of Americans to the level of a conscious proceduralist social philosophy that they positively affirm (a proviso that doubtless helped protect the theory from easy falsification). As Harvard political

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scientist Benjamin F. Wright put it in 1958, "It was not the consensus of ideology" that Americans enjoyed. "It was rather the consensus rooted in the common life, habits, institutions, and experience of generations" (Wright 1958, 57; quoted in Purcell 1973, 255). This was in keeping with the naturalist emphasis upon the social consequences of ideas—ideas in action—as opposed to their logical implications. In the eyes of consensus theorists, "moral relativism" was not merely a premise in a philosophical argument for democracy. It was a lived reality. What consensus theorists saw when they looked at American society was, in Purcell's apt gloss, an "institutionalized relativism" characterized by openness, tolerance, and pluralism (Purcell 1973, 211). Ethical relativism thus became, at one and the same time, the philosophical justification for democracy and the empirical foundation of it.

The Relativist Defense of Democratic Proceduralism

The debts of this new theory of American democracy to the wartime debate over totalitarianism and scientific method are deep. American political scientists came out of the debate with their commitment to scientific naturalism intact. Indeed, their commitment was redoubled. Value skepticism, the erstwhile vice of scientific naturalism, had been turned by relativist theory into the central democratic virtue. Those who adopted a "relativistic" attitude toward values were being good democrats at the same time that they were (by virtue of engaging in the rather different project of value-free social science) being good scholars. All "spiritualist" and normative notions such as right, sovereignty, public interest, and legitimacy were dropped, replaced by the neutral language of political process.

To such theorists, America exemplified a society held together without agreement on fundamental values (in particular, without a common *ideology*); what it had instead was a shared democratic "culture."[16]

On its face, the turn to culture is puzzling, for one normally thinks of a "culture" in just the totalistic terms about which one thinks of an ideology. But the puzzle is solved once one appreciates the *kind* of culture that social scientists, beginning with Dewey, attributed to democracies. Democratic culture, in Dewey's language, was a "scientific" culture—a "secular," "skeptical," "experimental" culture charac-

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terized more by common attitudes and habits than by common beliefs. In contrast to other political systems (in particular, in contrast to totalitarianism, which, it was argued, was held together by common adherence to a consciously cultivated ideology), democracy was held together by common adherence to a largely unconscious cultural tradition, understood as a set of shared attitudes and behavioral patterns. In Purcell's words, "Democracy required a kind of unity to endure, but it was a pragmatic, relativist, cultural unity and not a theoretical, ethical, or absolute unity" (Purcell 1973, 215). The notion that democracies were held together by a consensus on procedures, and that this procedural consensus was sustained by a skeptical, relativist, pragmatic, tolerant, "scientific" culture, became a hallmark of postwar political science.

By the same token, the rejection of moralistic, "absolutist" politics as ideological and "totalitarian" implied, by the logic of the democracy/totalitarianism dichotomy, that such politics was undemocratic and un-American. American politics, it now appeared, was—and should be—"practical" and preoccupied with the brokering of mundane "interests." Richard Hofstadter, perhaps the most widely read historian of the 1950s and 60s, exemplified the shift. As a young scholar in the 1930s, he was sympathetic to the Progressive program and the Progressive view of history, especially its emphasis upon the covert influence of economic interests. But by 1948, although retaining the emphasis upon the economic factor, he swept away the Progressive notion that American history was dominated by a broad ideological conflict between Hamiltonians and Jeffersonians, i.e., selfish economic conservatives and public-minded reformers. Rival political camps, it was now emphasized, carried out their struggles within a shared horizon of "capitalist culture."[17] Given Hofstadter's own reform background, he wished to paint a sympathetic portrait of the Progressives. But the force of the democracy/totalitarian dichotomy carried him into criticism. The broad programs for social reform of the populist-Progressives, while high-minded, now seemed overly ideological and utopian. Indeed, an analogy between American populism and the collectivist ideas of America's totalitarian enemies lay just beneath the surface of *The Age of Reform* (1955), even down to details, as when Hofstadter noted the populists' penchant for scapegoating and drew out from their rhetoric a previously undetected and latent anti-Semitism.

As for the expert-Progressives, Hofstadter diminished them, and

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the relevance of their ideological commitments, by subjecting them to sociological and psychological analysis. Their interest in reform, and especially in guiding the hand of reform, was not so much a natural outgrowth of deeply held social ideals, but a response to, and compensation for, their loss of power and prestige in the new industrial order. In light of these reevaluations, the resistance put up by the American political system to comprehensive Progressive reform programs now appeared as a sign of health, not dysfunction (Hofstadter 1948; Hofstadter 1955). In a less nuanced version of this position, Daniel J. Boorstin (e.g., 1953), another leading postwar historian, organized his entire narrative of American history around the notion that America has enjoyed such a good run historically precisely because its politics is piecemeal and pragmatic rather than comprehensive and ideological. These historians were among the most important voices for the dissemination of the relativist persuasion among the educated public, but their narratives were really but projections onto the past of an understanding of democracy hammered into shape by social scientists reacting against totalitarianism.[18]

Having reduced all values to "interests," democratic relativists, in keeping with their renewed commitment to value skepticism, treated all interests as morally equivalent. Accordingly, their analysis of democratic politics shifted away from its normative discourse to the processes by which conflicts of interests were mediated. As Theodore Lowi (1969, 70) notes caustically, "the ends of government and the justification of one policy or procedure over another are not to be discussed, according to the new view. The *process* of formulation is justification in itself."

Democratic Pluralism vs. State Autonomy

The attention given to interests over ideology, when combined with the assumption of American value pluralism, translated easily into the assumption that the really effective factor in American politics was a plurality of interests organized into groups. Hannah Arendt (1951) in particular had emphasized the deliberate effort of totalitarian regimes to "atomize" their populations, destroying parties, churches, unions, and any other group formation that might foster loyalties, ideas, or interests at odds with the state. By implication, the presence of a rich mosaic of groups and "voluntary associations" was taken as evidence

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of a healthy democratic society, even allowing for the tendency of such groups to become "politicized" and press demands upon the government. The early decades of the century had been awash in Progressive journalistic and social scientific exposés of the insidious influence of "pressure groups" and "special interests" on the legislative process. What was new was the widespread sense of the beneficence of these activities, taken as a whole. They were now seen as the primary avenue by which governments become responsive to emerging social needs.

The group approach to American government was not new, at least in broad outline. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Charles Beard and Arthur Bentley both argued for a reorientation of political science toward the study of economic interest groups. Bentley, whose major work in political science was even entitled *The Process of Government* (1908), and who was frequently cited by postwar group theorists, has an especially good claim to being the godfather of postwar pluralist theory. But it is significant that both Beard and Bentley were marginalized by the political science profession during this phase of their work, and they both dropped out of the university system (Ross 1991, 458–67). After the war, however, variants of these theories swept the field. Indeed, for some, the activity of interest groups was part and parcel of the political process. To study the political process was to study societal groups.

The emphasis upon plural groups accorded nicely with the notion that power was dispersed within the American political system. Indeed, having taken note of the diversity of competing interest groups in the United States, and having postulated their preponderant influence in political decision making, it was practically a direct inference that political power would be dispersed. As V. O. Key (1958, 10) put it in his influential writing on the subject, effective power was so dispersed in America that "the locus of power may shift from question to question and even from time to time on the same question." American society was "pluralist." Its pluralism of values produced a pluralism of groups, and its pluralism of groups produced a decentralization of power. This, too, provided a sharp contrast with totalitarianism, which was understood to concentrate power in the hands of a single individual (a Hitler or a Stalin).

Carl Friedrich was one who helped accentuate the contrast, in terms directly relevant to the reversal of attitudes toward state auton-

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omy. "The state," Friedrich wrote, in a brief historical introduction to his authoritative treatment of totalitarianism,

> was recognized as a new order in the sixteenth century. Jean Bodin more especially formalized its understanding by linking the state with sovereignty. The claim that the ruler of a state must be sovereign, if the state is to epitomize a good order, amounted to claiming that the ruler must be free of all restraints. Jean Bodin did not, in fact, dare to go that far, though some of his more radical formulations do. But Hobbes did and thus completed the doctrine of the modern state.

"The genuine state concept calls for an absolute ruler, an autocrat," Friedrich concluded. "When seen in this perspective, the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century are the outcome of movements directed against the denigration of the state in the liberal age" (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965, 6 and 7).[19] After being given such a malodorous pedigree, it is no wonder that the concept of "the state" was erased from descriptions of American democracy, and that state autonomy was abandoned as an ideal. The wider the distribution of political initiative, and the more it came from outside the halls of government, the better.

These shifts in emphasis from state to society were part of a dramatic reappraisal of the merits of existing American institutions and practices. Often, the very same features of American democracy that had attracted the condemnation of Progressives were now counted as blessings. The reappraisal of political pressure groups is only the most obvious example among many. For example, the preponderant influence of special interests, and especially of economic elites, in American governance now seemed benign, even beneficent, because they were both more informed—in this, they replaced social-scientific and judicial experts—and more likely than the masses to evince the skeptical, tolerant, pragmatic spirit necessary to a democracy (an impression greatly reinforced by the experience with McCarthyism). Similarly, American political parties, always short on principles and clear policy positions, were now seen as important nonideological forums for compromise among conflicting interests and classes. Widespread voter apathy now appeared as a valuable counterweight to ideological politics. Even the bosses of the old urban political machines, once denounced as poisonous spiders weaving webs of corruption, were now praised for their integrating function, harmonizing divergent interests and knitting diverse immigrant communities into the fabric of Amer-

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ican life. The very same lack of principle that led them to sell offices to the highest bidder and to buy voter loyalty with occasional perquisites was now glossed as evidence of nonideological "moderation" (Herring 1965, 137).[20]

Having defined both the United States and democracy as the polar opposites of totalitarianism, it was a short step to portray existing American practices as definitive of a well-functioning democracy. Thus, while the postwar political scientific literature is filled with normative disavowals—"inquiry into how men ought to act is not a concern of research in political behavior," wrote David Truman (1951, 37–38; quoted in Ricci 1984, 137)—naturalistic description of how American democracy "really worked" blurred with normative prescriptions of how a modern democracy *ought* to work. What this added up to was the "social conservatism" of which postwar social scientists were so often accused by the generation coming of age in the 1960s. In reality, postwar social scientists were an overwhelmingly liberal cohort, the direct descendants of the Progressives. But the encounter with totalitarianism, and the intellectual framework that emerged from that encounter, did deter advocacy of radical reform. As Purcell (1973, 253) notes, "By the early fifties many, like Boorstin, were equating all broad moral and social theories with ideology, pejoratively used to mean an unrealistic, moralistic absolutism that by its very nature endangered social tranquility. By discrediting ideology and morally based pleas for social change, they tended to equally discredit any call for a significant restructuring of American society." The very fact that the unity of the nation was understood to rest, not upon a common creed, but upon a common culture—a congeries of rules and behaviors unconsciously followed in everyday interactions—probably tended to magnify fears that dramatic social reconstruction might spark a social meltdown. Widely sympathetic to New Deal causes, and to the cause of African-American civil rights (especially after the confrontation with Hitler's racial caste system), American social scientists were even more sympathetic to the case for gradualism.

It is worth noting that the shift away from "statism" led to a disavowal of prewar political science on epistemological grounds. The "behavioralism" that social scientists wore on their sleeves after the war was in fact little more than a refurbishing of the scientific naturalism of their immediate predecessors, yet their newly democratic orientation placed them in such a different mental universe that they were apt to

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believe the change to be the consequence of a methodological break (rather than the ideological break that it was), and to use this as grounds for dismissing the approaches of their predecessors as relics of a prescientific age. As David Truman (1971, xviii) wrote, quite unfairly,

> Until after World War II most political scientists were preoccupied with the formalities of government. Aside from those concerned with the speculative, philosophical side of the discipline, most of them focused their energies on descriptions of and commentaries on constitutions and formal institutions, with excursions, not necessarily minor, into prescriptions for change and for reform.

Others acknowledged the scientific aspirations of the preceding generation, but dismissed their work as the mere collection of facts.[21] Postwar political scientists thought of themselves as making a properly scientific departure. They were therefore not inclined to cultivate, or even take cognizance of, the theoretical frameworks of the past.[22] Among other things, the prewar interest of American political scientists in the possibilities of autonomous state action disappeared from the collective memory of the discipline. At the same time that the dark shadow of totalitarianism kept political scientists from pinning any normative hopes on state autonomy, it also directed their attention away from the autonomy that the American state already enjoyed as a matter of empirical fact.

The new orientations of political science—(philosophical) value relativism, (empirical) value pluralism, procedural consensus, nonideological interest groups, democratic process, dispersed power, and the United States as the democratic ideal—together formed what David Ricci has called a "new liberal matrix" for postwar political science. Already by the early 1940s these emphases had crystallized into an analytic framework for the empirical study of democracy, notably in the trail-blazing work of Carl Friedrich and Pendleton Herring, two of the most highly regarded political scientists of the period. Friedrich sketched broad constitutional comparisons between democracies and dictatorships, while Herring, his colleague at Harvard, filled in the details of American proceduralist democracy. For over two decades, this matrix set the parameters of the leading schools of postwar political, legal, and social theory. In particular, they defined the leading paradigms of postwar political science: pluralism, structural function-

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alism, and an amalgam of these, modernization theory (or political development theory).

How Societal Groups Control the State

"Pluralism," as an empirical theory of governance, comes in a variety of flavors. But as this designation has come to be applied, what they all have in common is the claim that political power, or influence, is dispersed among a multiplicity of actors, each "representing" (formally or informally) a different societal group or "interest group."[23] If populist democracy means majority rule, and oligopoly and dictatorship mean minority rule, then pluralism (or "polyarchy," in the idiolect of one leading pluralist, Robert Dahl) means "minorities rule" (Dahl 1956, 132). The overwhelming tendency of pluralists has been to see this arrangement as good—a system that is adaptive, because open to emerging social demands, yet stable, because group membership is multiple and overlapping; a system in which inequalities are quite real, yet largely benign, since most every group finds some form of representation in the halls of power, and since the influence of various interest groups varies from time to time and from issue to issue.

The most elaborate account of interest-group politics came early on from David Truman. In his own words, *The Governmental Process* (1951) "is an effort to take the concept of group, especially the interest or 'pressure' group, as a primary unit of analysis, and to examine patterns of action on the governmental scene in such terms" (1971, xix). Writing from the perspective of 1970, Truman complained that *The Governmental Process* was "often misunderstood" to imply that "organized nongovernmental groups . . . have a monopoly of initiative in the system," and that governmental actors are "mere passive recorders or referees of contests among such groups" (ibid., xxxi). If this was a misunderstanding, it was one for which Truman bears the responsibility, since all his examples cut against the notion of state autonomy. His treatment of the executive branch, for example, suggests that the twentieth-century expansion of the executive's activity in legislation and discretionary administration came in response to interest-group claims upon the government, and that it only brought an increase in the play of these interests within the government. Furthermore, the exceptional cases of governmental initiative that Truman does mention are described as proactive responses to emerging interests not yet

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organized as groups (ibid., xix, xxxi, and 397–98).[25] Absent is the notion that government might pursue ends of its own, distinct from those of private citizens; or the possibility that executives might carry into office, and seek to implement, political visions, or "ideologies," that transcend the normal push and pull of interest-group politics—visions like those of Theodore Roosevelt or Woodrow Wilson, for example. But it is this absence that made *The Governmental Process* so appealing to postwar social scientists. Truman's picture of American democracy as devoid of state autonomy fell firmly within the postwar relativist framework.

And so did Truman's book in every other respect. For example, the organized interest groups that march across the pages of *The Governmental Process* are invariably of the mundane sort—labor unions, trade associations, farm lobbies, professional organizations, corporate lobbies—basically the major occupational groups (although with a few "community activity" groups such as the Anti-Saloon League thrown in). The basic image is not of ideological conflict, but of the mundane pursuit of economic favoritism, of the sort that would be recognized today as "rent seeking" (although Truman preferred to think of these activities as appeals for government to help "restore the balance" of a social group after its patterns of interaction have been so disturbed as to place the group in a "serious disequilibrium" from which it cannot recover on its own [1971, 29–31]).

Further, in keeping with the relativist framework, Truman (1971, 50–51) justifies his focus on interest groups, to the exclusion of holistic entities such as "the state," by denying that Americans share fundamental values. There is no "interest of the nation as a whole" separate from "those of the various groups included within it."

> Even in war, when a totally inclusive interest should be apparent if it is ever going to be, we always find pacifists, conscientious objectors, spies, and subversives, who reflect interests opposed to those of "the nation as a whole." . . . In developing a group interpretation of politics, therefore, we do not need to account for a totally inclusive interest, because one does not exist.

Of course, absence of shared fundamental values is hardly proven by pointing to the presence of conflicting interests.[26] And the existence or nonexistence of shared values is not even relevant to the question of the existence and autonomy of the state. The very flimsiness of the argu-

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ment only evidences the extent to which the existence of value pluralism, and the diminution of the state, could be taken for granted.

Truman professed value neutrality in his empirical research, but this did not mean that Truman's work was noncommittal. American democracy worked, and naturalistic descriptions of its operation blended into prescriptions for its preservation. "The great political task now as in the past is to perpetuate a viable system," Truman (1971, 524) declared in the concluding chapter. Whether this was universally the task that political actors of the past assigned themselves is doubtful, but it certainly was a task that Truman and his cohort embraced. Truman's contribution, as he saw it, was to reverse the judgment of previous generations who had seen organized interest groups as a threat to American democracy.[27] Truman (1971, 322–32) allowed that the structure of American government—its open texture, its division into branches, and the dispersal of the responsibility of each branch across federal, state, and local levels—provides interest groups with numerous and diverse points of access. But on the whole, this is a strength, not a weakness. "This diversity assures a variety of modes for the participation of interest groups in the formation of policy, a variety that is a flexible, stabilizing element" (ibid., 519). Meanwhile, an even more important source of stability comes from the structure of American group affiliations itself. The typical American is a member of a variety of groups. His "overlapping membership" means that each group of which he is a member, in order to maintain his allegiance, must guard against offending the sensibilities of the other groups to which he belongs. And since the range of other groups to which the various members of any one group belong is vast, the demands of this group (and of all groups) upon government will tend to be both moderate and narrow, rather than extreme and comprehensive (i.e., ideological). In sum, the open structure of government, combined with the overlapping structure of group affiliations, give the American political system a "dynamic stability that permits gradual adaptation" (ibid., 535).

Truman's emphasis upon the stability of American interest-group politics would in fact have provided little consolation to previous political scientists, who were concerned about its consequences for the *content* of American governmental policy (especially as they saw this policy being biased in the direction of "big business"). But after the war (and despite the unprecedented degree of industry concentration and industry access to government that the war brought), interest-

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group politics was seen as a virtue because of the stability it lent to American democracy.

But the most important source of stability, according to Truman, and the feature of his account that most clearly marks it as a postwar product, is what he calls the American consensus on "the rules of the game." What is most revealing is the language Truman uses. In a rather opaque passage, Truman (1971, 51) grants that a political system is more than "the 'sum' of the organized interest groups in the society. We must go farther to explain the operation of such ideals or traditions as constitutionalism, civil liberties, representative responsibility, and the like." Without a broad consensus on rules of the game such as these, the system would tear itself apart. But in describing what sustains these rules, Truman (ibid.) expressly rejects the notion that it is liberal-democratic ideology: constitutionalism, civil liberties, and so forth, "are not . . . a sort of disembodied metaphysical influence. . . . We know of the existence of such factors only from the behavior and the habitual interactions of men. If they exist in this fashion, they are interests. We can account for their operation and for the system by recognizing such interests as representing . . . potential interest groups in the 'becoming' stage of activity." What Truman seems to be saying is that these rules are not really rules but generalizations from patterns of behavior, that these patterns of behavior reflect interests, and that these interests influence government conduct because they are the interests of "potential groups" that would form were the interests trampled upon. The overwhelming impression left by a passage such as this is that Truman is forcing ideological factors (the "disembodied metaphysical influence" of notions of natural equality, the natural and God-given rights of man, and so forth, traditionally invoked to defend liberal-constitutional practices) into the mold of mundane interests.

Elsewhere in the book, Truman (1971, 129 and 159) provides a less obscure account of what stands behind the American consensus on "the rules of the game." He does not use the term "democratic culture," but he invokes its equivalents: democratic "attitudes" and "habit backgrounds." These, and not a common ideology, are what solve the mystery of social order in a pluralist society.[28] They represent a consensus on procedures rather than a consensus on ends or ideas—just the type of consensus demanded by postwar liberal relativism.

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How Voters Control the State

What David Truman did for legislative politics, Robert Dahl did for electoral politics. Both in terms of intellectual acuity and influence, Dahl was probably the foremost theorist of democracy of his generation. For Dahl, the core meaning of democracy is popular control over leaders and their decisions. More precisely, democracy, as an ideal type, is a political system in which "the goals of every adult citizen . . . are to be accorded equal value in determining government policies" (Dahl 1956, 32).

Dahl did not believe that this ideal could be closely approximated in the real world. One of the central obstacles lay in the very nature of elections. "Strictly speaking, all an election reveals is the first preferences of some citizens among the candidates standing for office" (1956, 125). What elections do not reveal are citizens' preferences for policies. One minority segment of the electorate may vote for candidate A because it prefers his position on issue X, which is of most importance to it, even though it prefers the position of candidate B on issues Y and Z. Another minority segment votes for A because it prefers his position on issue Y, even though it prefers the position of candidate B on issues X and Z. And a third minority segment votes for A because it prefers his position on issue Z, even though it prefers the position of candidate B on issues X and Y. Because of this variation in the way that voters rank issues—an artifact of variations in preference *intensity*—candidate A ends up with a winning aggregation of minorities, even though broad majorities would prefer the policies of candidate B. "This," Dahl concludes, "is an instance, not of majority rule or even of minority rule, but of *minorities* rules" (ibid., 128).

Because, as in this example, policy positions are bundled with candidates, and furthermore because some voters reward or penalize a candidate for past (and perhaps irreversible) policies rather than current policy proposals, and because some voters don't consider policy much at all when voting, elections tell us very little about majority policy preferences. By implication, they can't be counted on to make politicians responsive to majority preferences. Nor is the problem corrected in the interelection period, for, with most of the citizenry politically disengaged, "most inter-election policy seems to be determined by the efforts of relatively small but relatively active minori-

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ties" (Dahl 1956, 130). Making reference to the work of Truman and Arthur Bentley, Dahl (ibid., 131) concludes that

> neither elections nor interelection activity provide much insurance that decisions will accord with the preferences of a majority of adults or voters. Hence we cannot correctly describe the actual operations of democratic societies in terms of the contrasts between majorities and minorities. We can only distinguish groups of various types and sizes, all seeking in various ways to advance their goals, usually at the expense, at least in part, of others.

Nevertheless, it turns out that a system of "minorities rule," while not exactly reflecting citizen preferences, is the only real safeguard against tyranny, whether of a majority or a minority. Through careful logical analysis, Dahl shows that formal constitutional checks and balances cannot be counted on to prevent majority tyranny. But if specific policies are, in the usual case, the product of "minorities rule," then the worries of Madison, Tocqueville, and others about the tyranny of the majority is misplaced. "If majority rule is mostly a myth, then majority tyranny is mostly a myth too. For if the majority cannot rule, surely it cannot be tyrannical" (ibid., 133).[29] At the same time, "minorities rule" protects minorities. Because policy making is dominated by "relatively small but politically active minorities," and because a group whose freedoms are under threat is liable to become politically active, it will usually be able to check the grosser dimensions of the threat.[30] Not formal constitutional rights, nor formal constitutional checks, but "social checks" are what protect minorities (ibid., 35, 135, 143).

But the freedom that democratic leaders have from true majority control does not translate into state autonomy, for they remain highly responsive to the politically active minorities that form their winning coalition. Elections, combined with continuous political competition among individuals and parties,

> make governmental leaders so responsive to non-leaders that the distinction between democracy and dictatorship still makes sense. . . . Elections and political competition do not make for government by majorities in any very significant way, but they vastly increase the size, number, and variety of minorities whose preferences must be taken into account by leaders in making policy choices. I am inclined to think that it is in this characteristic of elections—not minority rule but

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> minorities rule—that we must look for some of the essential differences between dictatorships and democracies. (Dahl 1956, 132.)

As can be inferred from this passage, state autonomy is a trait of totalitarian dictatorships.[31] Protection of the interests of each minority, and responsiveness of government officials to the aggregate of minorities, are traits of democracies.

And they are especially the traits of American democracy.

> A central guiding thread of American constitutional development has been the evolution of a political system in which all the active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some crucial stage in the process of decision. (Dahl 1956, 137.)

As already noted, this is not the result of the written Constitution.

> To assume that this country has remained democratic because of its Constitution seems to me an obvious reversal of the relation; it is much more plausible to suppose that the Constitution has remained because our society is essentially democratic. (Ibid., 143.)

Consistent with the consensus theory approach, Dahl downplays the import of official discourses of legitimacy—the stuff of "ideology"—and highlights social conditions and culture in sustaining democracy. In particular, Dahl enumerates eight procedural rules, or norms, as preconditions of a responsive government—the eight defining characteristics of "polyarchy." And while Dahl emphasizes that no society ever has, or probably ever could, enforce all these rules to a maximal degree, he closes *A Preface to Democratic Theory* with a brief history of the American Republic, in which he submits that, through contingencies of geography, demographics, and history, the United States, to a unique degree, has come to possess the characteristics of a polyarchy.

> With all its defects, [the American political system] does nonetheless provide a high probability that any active and legitimate group will make itself heard effectively at some stage in the process of decision. . . .
>
> Probably this strange hybrid, the normal American political system, is not for export to others. But so long as the social prerequisites of democracy are substantially intact in this country, it appears to be a relatively efficient system for reinforcing agreement, encouraging moder-

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ation, and maintaining social peace in a restless and immoderate people operating a gigantic, powerful, diversified, and incredibly complex society. (Ibid., 150, 151.)

How Democratic States Meet Societal Needs

The other major theoretical development that came to be assimilated to the relativist framework is structural functionalism. Its original home was in sociology, where it was primarily developed by Talcott Parsons. Parsons's work did not find an immediate audience. It surely did not help his cause that he was virtually an illiterate in American sociology and uninterested in engaging with it, dismissing it in 1932 as "either glorified economics [or] glorified behaviorism" (quoted in Camic 1991, xxxix). Parsons's own intellectual outlook and research agenda were initially set by American institutionalist economics (especially by Walton Hamilton and Clarence Ayers, with whom he studied at Amherst). Graduate study in the 1920s at London and Heidelberg largely confirmed his institutionalist predilections, but changed his reference group to the great European theorists (especially Hobhouse, Weber, Durkheim, and Pareto), which only further hindered communication with American readers. But his "action theory" found a newly receptive audience after the rise of the relativist defense of democracy.

Two things paved the way for its reception. On the one hand, it conformed to the mold of a "consensus theory." At the core of Parsons's theory was a solution to "the problem of order" raised by the means-ends ("instrumental") conception of action that he adopted from his neoclassical economist colleagues at Harvard. What allows instrumentally rational actors to avoid conflict with each other? His solution was to conceive of instrumental action as embedded within a regulative cultural framework. This was obviously reminiscent of the "consensus theory" image of a pluralist society held together by a cultural consensus on procedures, even though Parsons placed greater emphasis on "common ultimate values" as a key component of this consensus.

Parsons's work was filled with concepts reassuring to a generation of social scientists anxious to show how a pluralist world was knit together. Especially appealing for political scientists was Parsons's notion of society as a self-maintaining system of social roles, through which sundry social "functions" are carried out. Each component of this characterization struck a familiar note.

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First, the notion of a "system," like that of a "process," suggested that the meat of politics lay beyond formal constitutional structure and its accompanying ideological discourse. But the notion had additional advantages, in its stronger suggestion of totality and stability. "The term *system*," Gabriel Almond (1956, 393) enthused, "satisfies the need for an inclusive concept which covers all of the patterned actions relevant to the making of political decisions. . . . In contrast to *process*, the concept of *system* implies a totality of relevant units, an interdependence between the interactions of units, and a certain stability in the interaction of these units." Second, the notion of the "role" as the basic "relevant unit" of the political system focused attention on procedures rather than substance, on means rather than ends. To focus on roles is to focus on recurrent behavior—that which is formally or informally proceduralized. If one takes the next step, as did Almond (1956, 394–95), and defines the political system as a "patterned interact of roles" or "structure of roles," then scientific analysis of politics is given over to the description of normal procedure, and the question of ends, especially ends that challenge the existing system, falls by the wayside.

Third, to focus on the social whole as a *self-maintaining* system of roles implies an overlapping consensus on these procedures; in Parsonian language, "shared role expectations" keep the system tending toward "equilibrium." Procedural consensus thus stood as a leading prophylactic against social disintegration, as it did in consensus theory in general. Fourth, breaking down political systems into discrete "functions" was an ideal already familiar to those experimenting with "process" theories, and furthermore, it seemed to hold the key to a value-neutral description of political systems. As Almond (1965, 186) put it, "The concept of function pushes us into realism and away from normative or ideological definitions. To answer functional questions we have to observe what a particular social system actually is and does." It also promised a neutral method of comparing political systems by breaking them down into common functions and comparing their means for fulfilling these functions.

Finally, the tendency of structural functionalism to reduce social theory to an exercise in empirical classification was, from the point of view of the postwar generation of social scientists, actually a strength and not a weakness, for it divorced social theory from the controversial normative agendas of theorists such as Marx, Comte, and Spencer. This reduction was a telling development. On the surface, it would seem to be no more than the continuation of prewar natural-

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ism. But looking more deeply, the focus of structural functionalism on the objective description of social systems rather than on the objective description of social problems (a leading preoccupation of prewar naturalistic social scientists) betrayed an implicit satisfaction with the existing order. Even though Parsons himself was a strong supporter of reform efforts, particularly as directed at America's African-American population, his formal theoretical work reflected both his Weberian sympathies and the broader scientific mood in dropping such evaluative questions. In sum, structural functionalism's emphasis on extra-constitutional processes, on procedures rather than substance, on stability through procedural consensus, on official value agnosticism while implicitly accepting the "is" as an "ought"—all of this fit neatly within the relativist framework.

But what for our purposes is most relevant is the part structural functionalism played in obscuring the realities of state autonomy. Its supposition that roles interacted stably, while not strictly inconsistent with the notion of state autonomy, certainly downplayed it, as did the hypothesis that systems tend toward equilibrium. But the "systems" concept downplayed state autonomy in a more direct way, by leaning on an "energy conversion" metaphor to describe the relation of government to society. As Almond (1965, 189) put it, "Another way of thinking about the interaction of political systems with their environments is to divide the process into three phases, as is usually done in systems theory—input, conversion, output." "Inputs" are the demands made upon the government. "Outputs" are the policies, rules, and regulations that government enacts. "Conversion" is the process internal to the political system that turns inputs into outputs. This language didn't exactly rule out the possibility of state autonomy. Almond (e.g., ibid., 194) himself made a practice of noting that inputs may be generated from within the political system by political elites. Nevertheless, the energy metaphor of input-conversion-output relegated state autonomy to the background. And as we will see, even in Almond's account, such autonomy was minimized in well-functioning democracies.

Theorizing State Autonomy Away

Almond was arguably the most eminent specialist of his generation in comparative political development, a field with close ties to "modern-

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ization theory." Not coincidentally, he was also the most able synthesizer of all of these strands of relativist democratic theory.

For one thing, Almond accepted the democracy/totalitarianism dichotomy as the organizing principle for comparative work. Although he criticized the dichotomous schema of early comparativists such as Carl Friedrich for being exclusively focused on Western political systems, his own typology retains the dichotomy and simply tacks on two new categories that amount to mixed modes. As introduced in 1956, Almond's typology distinguishes "the Anglo-American . . . , the Continental European . . . , the pre-industrial, or partially industrial, political systems outside the European-American area, and the totalitarian political systems." The first and last of these reproduce the standard democracy/totalitarian dichotomy, while the middle two lie somewhere in between (Almond 1956, 392–93 and 408).

Moreover, Almond was a pioneer among political scientists in translating the categories of liberal constitutionalism into those of structural-functionalism, the better to compare Western and non-Western regimes.

> Instead of the concept of the "state," limited as it is by legal and institutional meanings, we prefer "political system"; instead of "powers," which again is a legal concept in connotation, we are beginning to prefer "functions"; instead of "offices" (legal again), we prefer "roles"; instead of "institutions," which again directs us toward formal norms, "structures"; instead of "public opinion" and "citizenship training," formal and rational in meaning, we prefer "political culture" and "political socialization." (Almond 1960, 4.)

And finally, Almond adopted the pluralists' account of the American political system, which he used not only to differentiate democracy from totalitarianism, but also to distinguish a "modern" from a "traditional" political system. Indeed, it is in comparative work that the postwar status of American democracy as a norm becomes clearest. What passes as an objective description of existing institutions domestically becomes the ideal terminus of a process of political modernization overseas.

The keystone of Almond's ambitious analytical framework is the pluralist ideal of a political system that is maximally open and responsive to the (non-ideological) interests of the populace—one that smoothly translates multifarious narrow demands into uniform, moderate public policy. Whether speaking of the difference between tradi-

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tional and modern political systems, or between totalitarian and democratic ones, the central contrasts Almond draws center on how fluidly societal interests influence state policy.

Almond highlights a number of variables as particularly important to securing this fluidity: the kind of interests advanced (what he calls the "style of interest articulation"); the kind of "structures," or vehicles, that carry these interests into the political process; the style and structure of political parties; the maintenance of firm boundaries between functionally differentiated structures; and, conditioning them all, the character of the reigning "political culture." As we will see, each of these variables has a pluralist, relativist pedigree, though now translated into the idiom of structural functionalism. And all are placed on a continuum running simultaneously from totalitarian to democratic and from traditional to modern.

As Almond sees it, the key to maintaining fluidity in the political system lies less on the "output" side (rule making, rule application, and rule adjudication) than on the "input" side (the process of "interest articulation" and "interest aggregation"). Interest aggregation is particularly crucial, since only when interests aggregate can they be translated into a single public policy. But not just any kind of interest is aggregable.

> With regard to the style of interest articulation, the more latent, diffuse, particularistic, and affective the pattern of interest articulation, the more difficult it is to aggregate interests and translate them into public policy. Hence a political system characterized by these patterns of interest articulation will have poor circulation between the rest of the society and the political system, unless the society is quite small and has good cue-reading authorities. On the other hand, the more manifest, specific, general, and instrumental the style of interest articulation, the easier it is to maintain the boundary between the polity and society, and the better the circulation of needs, claims, and demands from the society in aggregable form into the political system. A political system with an interest articulation structure and style of this kind can be large and complex and still efficiently process raw demand inputs from the society into outputs responsive to the claims and demands of that society. (Almond 1960, 36.)

Decoded (and as Almond's accompanying examples make yet more clear), this contrast, drawn in terms of systems-theory "pattern variables," amounts to a contrast, familiar from pluralist theory, between

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"mundane" occupational-group type interests (which in this view are readily aggregable) and "ideological" interests (which are not). The former are characteristic of the Anglo-American, democratic systems; the latter are characteristic of those elements of the Continental European and preindustrial political systems that are totalitarian in flavor (34–38).

The character of the "structures" through which interests are articulated also affects the ease and extent of aggregation. Almond distinguishes four main types of structures that may be used to articulate interests: (1) associational interest groups (the "classic" organized interest groups—trade unions, business associations, civic groups, and suchlike); (2) non-associational interest groups ("kinship and lineage groups, ethnic, regional, religious, status and class groups which articulate interests informally, and intermittently," through informal delegations, for example, or through a member's friendly request to the state legislator at the country club); (3) anomic interest groups (street protests, riots); and (4) institutional interest groups (legislatures, political executives, armies, bureaucracies, judicial circuits and the like; or legislative blocs, officer cliques and bureaucratic coteries within these organizations, which "articulate their own interests or represent the interest of groups in the society" beyond their formal function of rule making, rule execution, or rule adjudication (Almond 1960, 33–34). As this last category shows, Almond was well aware of the phenomenon of state autonomy, especially in totalitarian and "developing" countries. But he thought of it as a pathology, at least in large-scale societies, and downplayed its presence in the Atlantic democracies. Britain and America are blessed with a preponderance of associational interest groups, which organize interests in a manner that aids their smooth "processing"; while France, like other Continental European countries, and like many developing nations, is plagued by the other three varieties, which inject "raw," "diffuse," "unprocessed" claims directly into the conversion system, in a manner that makes it difficult to aggregate them with other interests (ibid., 35). In short, the interest-group pluralism of Truman and Dahl turns out to be the most fluid way to translate societal demands into public policy. And once again, its polar opposite is totalitarianism, where political initiative and social mobilization originate from the political apex.

Almond acknowledges "multi-functionality" among structures even in the most differentiated political systems, such as the American one. For example, interest groups are frequently involved not only in interest articulation, but also in interest aggregation (as when the

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"peak" labor and trade associations aggregate the interests of local units) and in rule making (helping write bills). Nevertheless, Almond (1960, 35–38) argues that relatively firm boundaries are conducive to the free circulation of interests into and through the political system, and therefore are to be preferred. That these structures are "bounded," it is worth noting, does not mean that they are autonomous in Skocpol's sense. On the contrary. When Almond speaks of the "autonomy" of these structures, he means that they are functionally differentiated, and therefore maximally open and responsive to the surrounding societal structures. And in the division of labor that Almond commends, political initiative lies with "society," while responsiveness in rule-making lies with the political system, or the state. In other words, Almond's emphasis on "good boundary maintenance" amounts to a strong criticism of state autonomy. Again, the defining contrast is between democratic and totalitarian political systems, with the "traditionalist" and "transitional" systems largely assimilated to the totalitarian:

> In certain political systems, such as the authoritarian and the primitive ones, the three functions of articulation, aggregation, and rule-making may be hardly differentiated from one another. . . . In other systems, such as the modern Western ones, there are partitions in the process, and separate structures or subsystems with boundaries take a distinctive part. Certainly, in the Anglo-American mass democracies this three fold division in function maintains the flow from society to polity and from polity to society (from input to output to input again) in an especially efficient manner. (Ibid., 39.)

In keeping with pluralist themes, Almond notes the diffusion of power within fluid democratic systems. "The role structure" in the Anglo-American political systems "is (1) highly differentiated, (2) manifest, organized, and bureaucratized, (3) characterized by a high degree of stability in the functions of the roles, and (4) likely to have a diffusion of power and influence within the political system as a whole" (Almond 1956, 399). Totalitarianism again provides the extreme contrast. It is a significantly "non-consensual" system, where the dissolution of voluntary associations leaves the citizenry "atomized," and where, within the state, multiple overlapping command channels are continually used by the supreme leader to destabilize functional roles (ibid., 404). This has the effect of preventing any stable delegation of power or creation of rival power centers, and insures

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to the greatest possible extent that all commands will be carried out. Totalitarianism, in other words, is a system of maximum power concentration and maximum state autonomy, while the Anglo-American system is one of minimum power concentration and minimum state autonomy.[32]

Almond's work may be taken as the culmination of a remarkable transformation, in which American democracy, so recently maligned by American intellectuals for its lack of critical intelligence and its domination by special interests, came to be embraced by them as a domestic blessing and an international model. Admiration for the political system of the United States was directed neither at its substantive values nor at the ends it pursued, about which there was almost complete silence. Admiration was directed instead at its procedures. This resolves the seeming paradox of a political science that, while professing to abjure value judgments, was clearly in sympathy with the political system of the United States. One could admire a process without making a value judgment—at least, so it seemed—because process was about the "how," not the "what," of politics.

But the "how" of American politics that postwar political scientists conjured up—their model of American democracy—was skewed. It carried forward emphases and assumptions that were highly polemical in origin, born of the encounter with totalitarianism. First, the emergence of Hitler and Stalin as the ultimate social engineers led American political scientists to forget their erstwhile Progressive allegiance to elite guidance, and what is more, to fall silent about all such activities in the American governmental system. If totalitarianism means elite social engineering, then American democracy must mean popular control. Second, their debate with the "ethical absolutists" led them to project their own ethical skepticism (or relativism) onto American democracy as a whole. Since moral absolutists are but totalitarians in waiting, Americans must be moral skeptics. And by implication, American politics must be pluralist (multi-valued, non-ideological, non-moralistic, moderate, bargaining). Put these assumptions together and one gets neither the tyranny of minority (or expert) rule, nor the tyranny of the majority, but what we might call the "pluralist populism" of "minorities rule."

Translated into institutional terms, this meant a politics dominated by interest groups, both in the legislative process and in the electoral process. While no doubt some groups would manage, some of the time, to impose some values on other groups, the system was mini-

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mally coercive because the process was open to all comers, and the "winning" groups changed regularly. Power was dispersed and shifting. Translated yet again into systems theory, this meant a "fluid" political system in which political initiative originates from outside government, is carried into it by interest groups, and is converted, through bargaining, into public policy. Input, conversion, output. Government becomes purely responsive—to societal energy. The image is of society acting upon itself.

From Pluralism to Weberianism

Pluralist theories are striking in their sophistication, their welcome aspiration toward holism, the range and interest of the evidence they highlight, their attention to institutions and activities beyond formal governmental structures, and their subtle analysis of numerous features of governance. Nevertheless, pluralist democratic theory has come in for a good deal of normative and empirical criticism over the years, much of it justified.[33] For example, pluralist analyses of the dispersion of power have been criticized as methodologically flawed owing to their superficial, "one-dimensional" power concept. To understand the distribution of power, one must not only know who makes the final policy decisions, but also why some decisions are never made at all because the relevant issues are systematically excluded from the political agenda (the "second dimension" of power), and why some potential issues are not even perceived as such because of the forces of political education, propaganda, and other influences on political perception (the "third dimension") (see Bachrach and Baratz 1962 and Lukes 1974).

Skocpol's criticism of pluralist and structural-functionalist frameworks, as already noted, is that they neglect the capacity of states—even Western, liberal democratic, "pluralist" states—"to formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society" (1985, 9). In this connection, she suggests a return to a continental European perspective, particularly that of Weber, whose work on bureaucracy and administration emphasizes the state's capacity for independent agency; and she cites several interesting contemporary studies, including one of her own, that emphasize the decisive role played by autonomously acting bureau-

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crats and civil service administrators in everything from mundane policy formation to "revolution from above" (ibid., 9–14).

None of the examples cited by Skocpol take up the question of the autonomy of the elected political leader—although, judging from a passing criticism she makes (Skocpol 1985, 4) of the treatment Mayor Richard Lee receives in Dahl's study of New Haven politics, I believe she would argue that pluralists downplayed this as well. By way of conclusion, therefore, I would like to fill in this portion of the critique of pluralism. We can take up Skocpol's invitation and go to Weber for this point, too—by turning not to Weber's writings on bureaucracy and administration, but to his complementary writings on electoral politics.

The pluralist image of electoral politics is of coalition building among interest groups in the narrow sense. Its signal virtue is that is secures a form of popular control of public policy. There is absolutely no doubt that assembling working coalitions of organized interest groups is an important dimension of democratic politics—important both for directly securing the votes of their members and for securing funds to pay for the enormous cost of a modern political campaign. But coalition politics is not everything, and arguably such a view of politics misses the most important thing.

The general political problem, as understood by Weber, is *not* to secure popular control of public policy. Weber had little confidence in the political knowledge or judgment of what he referred to as "the mass," and he would have been an inveterate opponent of democracy for Germany had he believed that extending the franchise would hand over control to this element. Rather, in Weber's view, the measure of a political system is its ability to recruit political leaders who, in the face of public ignorance and indifference (and even at times in the face of uninformed, or short-sighted, or low-minded popular opposition), will take responsibility for the future of the nation and (if governing a world power) for the direction of world history. In other words, Weber's vision of politics focused on securing political leaders with the inner and outer capacity to act autonomously on behalf of the national interest and even the interest of humankind, as best they may determine it. He favored extending the franchise because he believed that, under modern conditions, political democracy is better able to secure such leaders than any known alternative. In this respect, it is hard to imagine an account of democracy more at odds with that of the pluralists.

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I have presented Weber's case for political democracy at length elsewhere (Ciepley 1999, 205–225). For present purposes, two points are of particular importance: Weber's attitude toward a politics dominated by organized interest groups, and his understanding of the vocation of the political leader.

With respect to interest-group politics, Weber advocated democracy not because it would allow organized interests to more easily penetrate the political system, but because it would give the political leader a degree of *freedom* from these interests—especially economic interests. No system of governance can avoid the influence of money. But only systems of governance in which the ultimate currency of power (such as the ballot) is nonpecuniary and broadly distributed have any chance of escaping total dominance by the interests of financiers and bond traders (Weber 1994, 104–105, 215). But the point of the franchise isn't for government to be subjected to voter control. It is to give political leaders an independent basis of support, located in the public at large, from which they may act responsibly on behalf of the public interest as they see it (and which is not reducible to the vector sum of private interests).

In many respects, it will be noted, Weber's view is vintage Progressivism, of the expert-oriented variety. Interest groups threaten to hijack the public interest, and autonomous executives are called on to rescue it.[34] But Weber (1994, 126) differed from the main line of expert-Progressivism in that he avoided reducing politics to technicism, to a collection of social problems best tackled by technical experts. Expert civil servants play a crucial role in Weber's account of modern democracy. Political leaders provide them with a few general directives, in a few policy areas of most concern to the leaders (depending on their personal political "cause" and their political promises), but for the most part, these civil servants are the ones who set the main lines of policy and work out the details. Like the expert-Progressives, Weber envisions the exercise of considerable autonomy in bureaucracy. Nevertheless, executive autonomy is not exhausted by their work. There is also the autonomy of the political leader himself. This brings us to the second point.

From a Weberian perspective, it is a complete misunderstanding of the character of democracy to view democratic political leaders as passive instruments of society and its interest groups. First of all, such a view ignores the psychology of the political leader. Politics is a voluntary vocation, and the kind of political campaigning and party

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struggle that is necessary to victory in a mass democracy simply doesn't attract such self-abnegating characters.

> The business of politics is carried out by *interested parties*. (By "interested parties" I do *not* mean those vested material interests which influence politics in varying degrees, whatever form the state takes, but rather those people with political interests who strive for political power and responsibility in order to realize particular political ideas.) Yet precisely this conduct of politics by interested parties is the heart of the matter. For it is not the politically passive "mass" which gives birth to the leader; rather the political leader recruits his following and wins over the mass by "demagogy." (Weber 1994, 228.)

Weber's invocation of "demagogy" is liable to frighten. Suffice it to say that Weber did not believe demagogy to be exclusive to democracies; he understood it to be the indispensable tool of leaders in all polities no longer anchored by a passive peasantry (Weber 1994, 220). And he noted that democracies at least have available to them a number of devices (such as parties and parliaments) that help weed out "mere" demagogues from the political fold (ibid., 343–44). But the important point being made in this passage is that the political leader is an interested party. He is a person with a "passionate commitment to a 'cause' " (ibid., 353), or at least to some political idea or persuasion, and he engages in the struggle for political power in order to give it effect. In this respect, his vocation is the exact opposite of that of the bureaucratic official:

> Like "leaders," "officials" too are expected to make independent decisions and show organizational ability and initiative, not only in countless individual cases but also on larger issues. An official who receives an order which, in his view, is wrong can—and should—raise objections. If his superior then insists on the instruction it is not merely the duty of the official, it is also a point of *honour* for him to carry out that instruction as if it corresponded to his own innermost conviction, thereby demonstrating that his sense of duty to his office overrides his individual willfulness. . . . This is what is demanded by the spirit of *office*. (Ibid., 160.)

In other words, officials enjoy a fair amount of autonomy, but when push comes to shove, it is the duty and honor of the official to say "yes" to his master, the political leader. In sharp contrast,

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> A political *leader* who behaved like this would deserve our *contempt*. He will often be obliged to make compromises, which means sacrificing something of lesser importance to something of greater importance. If, however, he is incapable of saying to his master, whether this be a monarch or the *demos*, "either you give me this instruction *or I resign*," he is not a leader but merely what Bismarck called a miserable "clinger" to office. The official should stand "above the parties," which in truth means that he must remain outside the *struggle* for power of his own. The struggle for personal power and the acceptance of full *personal responsibility for one's cause* (*Sache*) which is the consequence of such power—this is the very element in which the politician and the entrepreneur live and breathe. (Ibid.)

In short, nothing could be further from the spirit of the political leader than to implement the interests of others. Autonomous action in the service of a personal cause is his calling, his very reason for entering the political fray.

Furthermore, having a cause turns out to be instrumental to the leader's political success. On the one hand, having a cause provides a "firm inner support" (Weber 1994, 355) for his actions. The decisive means of governance, after all, is violence (ibid., 360), and only such inner support can steel him against a loss of nerve in its use, or steer him away from discrediting self-contradictions (ibid., 354). On the other hand, commitment to a cause provides him his necessary *external* support—for, in order for a political leader to succeed, he must have about him a disciplined following, and "he can only keep control of his following as long as a sincere belief in his person and his cause inspires at least some of the group"—even if not a majority of them (ibid., 365). In short, the political leader's cause is what sustains him, psychologically and materially. Compared to it, the role of interest groups is quite secondary, and operates largely after the fact. The cause is the linchpin, the focus of his autonomy *vis à vis* society and its self-understood interests.[35]

The view of democratic political leaders as passive instruments of societal interests also overestimates the extent to which the body of the voting public translates its interests into policy preferences, or uses such policy preferences as a standard for judging political candidates, or indeed even *has* policy preferences. In Weber's view, political leadership approximates to the ideal type of "charismatic rule"—"rule by virtue of devotion to the purely personal 'charisma' of the 'leader' on the part of those who obey him" (1994, 312). In other words, devo-

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tion to the political leader is primarily focused on his personal qualities, not his policy positions. People "believe" in him and in his "call" to the task of leading men.[36] Although we don't know the exact number of people who voted for John McCain in the Republican and open primaries on account of his policy positions, we can surmise that the number was not large. It was his personal story, not his policy, that brought over voters even from the political left. It is this charismatic dimension of political leadership that grants the leader leeway to pursue his cause, whatever the exact policy preferences of the electorate might be.

However, even if we move beyond Weber and grant that, for at least some voters, message matters, then it still must be said that the pluralist view of democratic leaders as instruments of organized interests exaggerates the extent to which the voting public looks to politicians to serve their particular interests, as opposed to those of the nation. Pluralists took their image of a legislative process dominated by interest groups and imposed it upon the electoral process as well. "In a rough sense," Dahl (1956, 68) wrote, "the essence of all competitive politics is bribery of the electorate by politicians." But unfortunately for the pluralist view, it has been noted that "even the most dogged searchers after self-interested voting, could find paltry evidence for it, in comparison to the healthy effect of judgments of national conditions" (Wolfinger 1988, 110). As a result, campaigns focused on interest satisfaction have proven to be clear losers in actual political contest. Every so often a "candy store" politician manages to win office, but he is usually easy prey for an opponent with a reasonable command of "the vision thing." Joe Klein (1996, 31) expressed this well, in commenting on the lackluster group of candidates fielded by the Republican party for the 1996 presidential election:

> There is a hard, cold edge to [Senator Phil] Gramm, as there is to the entire Republican field. They talk tax rates, not virtues. They talk about efficiency, about giving people their money back, about returning government to local communities. That is important, and attractive—but insufficient. America is bound by more than the sum of our self-interested strivings. There is a national sense of romance, of destiny. There is a need for shared "challenges," a word the president wore out last week. Ronald Reagan tapped into those feelings—effortlessly. At his best, Bill Clinton can do it, too. Phil Gramm can call this sort of rhetoric "empty," but it's the battlefield on which presidencies are won.

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Even where one would most expect the political leader to have to relinquish his autonomy—in the currying of voter favor—the political leader is rarely pinned down on specific policy. Electoral success is more about mobilizing aspirations than interests. And arguably, it is more about charisma than either of these.

Weber's position on the autonomy of democratic leaders should hardly surprise the student of American politics, unless she imagines, for example, that the election of Reagan after Carter reflected a sudden swing in American public opinion from liberal to conservative. Public opinion definitely sets limits on what a democratic leader may undertake. But this is not nearly as constraining as are the opinions of rival elites. And neither public nor elite opinion comes close to putting the pluralist straightjacket on a chief executive with high political skills—especially the ability to "fight with words," as Weber would say. Nor is this all bad, if, as Weber argues, there are "autonomous political interests" vital to national preservation that fall beyond the attention horizon of citizens outside of the elite political stratum.[37] Skocpol's call for a return to Weber is welcome, and should encompass not only his writings on bureaucracy and the state, but his writings on politics more generally.

NOTES

1. In addition to the Herbst volume, among the best general writings on the influence of the German academic experience upon American universities and American academic conceptions of government, economy, and the role of academics, are those of Edward Shils. See, for example, Shils 1989 and Shils, "German and American Universities in their Reciprocal Relations (unpublished manuscript).
2. That this wasn't usually the actual consequence of such populist reforms is a separate issue from their intent.
3. For a good example of such optimism regarding autonomous administration, see Landis 1938.
4. Compare editions before and after 1908, the year of Young's intervention. Ross 1991, 192–93 also notes the shift.
5. On the origins and early history of the totalitarian concept, see Adler and Paterson 1970; Diggins 1972; and Lifka 1988. The brief alliance between the democracies of Western Europe and the Soviet Union in the defeat of Nazi Germany and fascist Japan brought a temporary waning of totalitarianism as a defining political category. But the onset of the Cold War quickly brought it back in full force (see Gleason 1995).

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6. I review this history in "Totalitarianism and the Rediscovery of Civil Liberties," ch. 4 of Ciepley 2001.
7. For a good general account of the institutionalization of the freedom/totalitarianism dichotomy in American social science, see Lifka 1988, chs. 1–3. See also Purcell 1973, chs. 11 and 13. For its institutionalization in law, see Peller 1988.
8. It is worth adding that, from the end of the nineteenth century into the early decades of the twentieth, it was something of a commonplace among educators defending the place of science in the university curriculum that scientific virtues—"a passion for knowledge, the love of truth, honesty, patience, singlemindedness of mind [sic], simplicity of character, humility, reverence, [and] imagination"—were not only also Christian virtues, but also the virtues required of a democratic citizenry. See Reuben 1996, 136.
9. Terminological precision would demand that we rename this the "skeptical theory of democracy," since, in its most perspicuous usage, "moral relativism" means that value questions *are* rationally decidable *within* the framework of a given cultural group or "conceptual scheme," whereas "moral skepticism" implies that they are never rationally decidable. The latter claim lay behind the new theory. Nevertheless, in popular usage "relativism" regularly incorporates the skeptical position, so Purcell's designation may stand.
10. The central documents for understanding Weber's case for democracy are collected in Weber 1994. On the present point, representative passages can be found at pp. 15–16, 228, and 355. For a synthetic overview of Weber's case, see Ciepley 1999. For a brief view, see the concluding section of the present essay.
11. For able documentation of the importance of virtue in classical political liberalism, see Berkowitz 1999. For the place of virtue in classical economic liberalism, see the essays collected in Hont and Ignatieff 1983.
12. For some of the leading contributions to the debate, see the essays collected in Waxman 1969 and Rejai 1971.
13. It is perhaps worth noting that this tension between the academic and "lay" response to totalitarianism is one of the roots of the legal, political, and cultural conflicts that comprise the "culture wars."
14. Below I only touch on developments in empirical political science in the first two decades after the war.
15. Michael Sandel (1996, 4–5) has noted that state neutrality does not emerge as an American ideal until after World War II, but he still assumes that it was an ideal of European classical liberals.
16. Dewey (1939) himself had helped shift attention to culture, arguing that successful democracies had a "scientific" culture.
17. Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* ([1955] 1991), one of the most important works of the consensus school of historians, is a brilliant elaboration of Hofstadter's thesis.
18. See, for example, the transitional position that had been staked out by Pendleton Herring already in 1940, who argued that the function of democ-

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ratic politicians "is to stand for relativity in the struggle of absolute values and thus to promote continuity and cohesion in social relations" (Herring 1965, 136; quoted in Ricci 1984, 111).

19. For a contrasting view of the history of the state concept—one that emphasizes the way in which the notion of "interests of state" was used by royal counselors to rein in the arbitrary rule of the monarch, thus turning the notion of the state *against* the notion of sovereignty—see Hirschman 1977.
20. Herring [1940] 1965 is an early source for all of these reappraisals.
21. Perhaps it would be more accurate for us to say that prewar social scientists, unhappy with the state of American democracy, wished to use science for the sake of reform and oriented their research toward that end—which might well mean collecting social statistics ("mere facts") with the intent that they be used by legislatures and government agencies in the task of social reform; while postwar social scientists, generally content with the state of American democracy, were focused on providing a description (even if a rose-tinted description) of the governmental process itself. Nevertheless, each cohort could equally assert the ideals of positivism.
22. With a few exceptions, as already noted, such as Arthur Bentley's work on group process.
23. In fact, neither Truman nor Dahl, two of the leading "pluralists," identified themselves as such in their early work. Truman, in particular, reserved the term for the guild socialists and syndicalists of the early twentieth century, from whom he wished to distinguish himself. But they more or less acquiesced to the designation once it came to be applied to them.
24. Robert E. Lane, the Yale political psychologist, put it bluntly: "Our political activists are distributed among social groups in such a way as to open up channels of influence for every group" (quoted in Purcell 1973, 260).
25. It is unclear that the "misunderstanding" of which Truman complains is anything more than a failure on the part of some readers to take note of these examples of proactive governmental response. But governmental anticipation of external interest pressures hardly qualifies as true state autonomy.
26. Indeed, even the empirical absence of shared fundamental values does not render incoherent the concept of a "public interest," unless one already assumes the value skepticism one is trying to establish.
27. Truman returns to this point repeatedly—in the preface, in the first chapter, in the final chapter—in short, in all the places where the topic of the book is "motivated."
28. This "second" account is probably but a more elaborate rendering of the first account. What Truman describes as democratic "attitudes" and "habits" appear to be the basis of what he first described simply as the "interests" of "potential groups." The reference to potential groups is a roundabout way of saying that people will organize against politicians who consistently violate the rules of the game. The reference to procedural interests is a strained attempt to address questions of legitimacy within the interest-group framework.

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29. Unfortunately, Dahl gives us no reason to believe that the rather contrived electoral example he gives will be "the usual case." But most of his readers were evidently inclined to go along.
30. In a telling piece of relativist arithmetic, Dahl (1956, 90) goes so far as to construe "intense preferences" as the modern equivalent of the "natural rights" that Madison wished to protect from majority tyranny.
31. Although Dahl uses the term "dictatorship" more often than "totalitarianism," the Soviet Union is the dictatorship he has in mind in this and many other passages.
32. Here as elsewhere, I am sympathetic to the relativists' portrait of totalitarianism. It is the contrasting portrait of democracy that I find suspect. This is probably to be expected, given that the former serves as the defining Other of the latter.
33. By and large, the criticisms apply *mutatis mutandis* to pluralism's leading successors, rational choice and public choice, which are interested in the aggregation of individual preferences by political institutions, and which are in this regard merely more sociologically impoverished instantiations of the same set of theoretical assumptions and orientations. However, these successors are beyond the scope of the present paper.
34. For a fine study that situates Weber within the political and intellectual climate of Progressivism, see Kloppenberg 1986.
35. A degree of idealization, it is fair to say, colors Weber's description of the political leader, whose qualities he wished to contrast favorably to those of the state officials who had been ruling Germany since the resignation of Bismarck. But it is probably also fair to grant that, in an open democratic system, the politician who rises to the top is indeed apt to be a leader in Weber's sense—one who lives *for* politics rather than merely *from* it.
36. Nor is this unreasonable. Circumstances change, unexpected issues arise (including the highest issue of declaring war), and one wouldn't want a political leader to be beholden to policy programs calibrated to yesteryear. One looks instead for someone who can be trusted to respond sensibly as situations present themselves. In an uncertain world, character eclipses policy program as the public's desideratum of qualification for political leadership.
37. Of course this begs the question of the importance of the nation-state, or some comparable political collectivity. The Weberian case for its importance can be found in Ciepley 1999, 217–18.

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Samuel DeCanio

BEYOND MARXIST STATE THEORY: STATE AUTONOMY IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

ABSTRACT: *Recent theories of the state often draw attention to states' autonomy from social preferences. This paper suggests that the phenomenon of public ignorance is the primary mechanism responsible for state autonomy in democratic polities. Such theorists as Skocpol and Poulantzus, who do not take account of public ignorance, either underestimate the state's autonomy or stress causal mechanisms that are necessary but not sufficient conditions for its autonomy. Gramsci's concept of ideological hegemony is promising, even though it is far too insistent on the penetration of ideology of any kind beyond relatively small numbers of political sophisticates.*

Until relatively recently, examinations of state activity marginalized the state's autonomy from social interests. Previous structural-functionalist, pluralist, and Marxist theories emphasized "the importance of interest and pressure groups in policy-making" (Almond 1988, 866), and downplayed the state's ability to operate autonomously from these interests.[1] However, the 1970s and 80s saw an explosion of interest in the autonomous capabilities of state actors.[2] Numerous studies examined a variety of instances where state actions diverged from societal interests. Such studies are most commonly associated with the efforts of Theda Skocpol, et al., to "bring the state back in" to social analysis. However,

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state autonomy has also been the subject of various neo-Marxist scholars, such as Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband.

Unfortunately, the existing accounts have not been successful in isolating the variables responsible for state autonomy. Barbara Geddes has commented:

> Although several authors have discussed the subject, no one has confirmed empirically the existence of political or social characteristics that allow governments to act autonomously. . . . As a result, analyses tend to focus more on the policy outcomes themselves rather than on the state structure that is hypothesized to produce the outcome. (Geddes 1994, 5–6.)

This paper attempts to suggest the empirical grounding for state autonomy that has thus far eluded state theory. I argue that certain characteristics of democratic mass publics—specifically those associated with their pervasive political ignorance—provide a powerful explanation for why states often enjoy autonomy from society.[3]

Isolating the public's political ignorance as the key independent variable for state autonomy provides a distinct departure from most existing state theories. To focus on the dynamics of the public's political knowledge is to recognize that society's primary check upon state actions is exercised through elections and public opinion. Concern with the interaction between public opinion and state actors highlights the unique mechanisms of domination that are created by democratic institutions. As this approach attributes state autonomy to the mass political ignorance that became salient following the state's adoption of such institutions, it may be helpful to call it "democratic state theory" so as to differentiate it from theories that, like Skocpol's, draw on premodern societies in conceptualizing the determinants of state autonomy.[4]

As democratic state theory emphasizes the importance of elections and public opinion, neither the ability of social groups to overthrow the state militarily nor to manipulate it economically may be as important in determining the degree of state autonomy as they were before the advent of modernity, nor as important as is the public's knowledge—or lack of knowledge—of the state's activities. If the mechanisms of reward and punishment that elections exercise over state agents are the primary means by which social preferences are translated into approval or disapproval over state policy and personnel, it may be quite important that empirical studies of the public's understanding of politics show a majority of the public to be ignorant of the most basic political information.

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If the public is deeply ignorant of the government's activities, state actors may enjoy a significant degree of autonomy simply because the public is unaware of what they are doing.

A democratic state theory would therefore illuminate significant aspects of state autonomy that have eluded prior theories, which are briefly reviewed and evaluated below. Skocpol's (1985) state theory focuses on the state's policy instruments (i.e., state capacities), which are necessary but not sufficient conditions for state autonomy. After discussing Skocpol's theory, I review several key studies of public opinion and voter behavior that illustrate the extent of the public's ignorance. In this section I suggest that public ignorance is perhaps the key independent variable responsible for state autonomy. Next I examine whether neo-Marxist state theory, exemplified by the work of Poulantzas (1978), suitably explains state autonomy. I contend that if we take cognizance of public ignorance, Poulantzas underestimates the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the democratic capitalist state. In this section I also summarize some of the concepts introduced by Antonio Gramsci. I suggest that while the public's ignorance lends support to Gramsci's analysis of ideological hegemony, such hegemony results from different mechanisms than those Gramsci held responsible. I conclude with a general discussion of state theory.

Non-Marxist State Theory

For purposes of contrast, we might label Skocpol's version of state theory non-Marxist state theory (hereafter NMST).[5] The contributions of NMST are varied and numerous.[6] In the interest of brevity I have chosen to use Skocpol as an ideal type, while noting that many NMST researchers depart from her method of analysis.

The chief NMST claim is that contrary both to the normative rationale of democratic states and to empirical theories such as Marxism and pluralism, "states conceived as organizations claiming control over territories and people may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society" (Skocpol 1985, 9). NMST investigates the ability of state actors to undertake such policies, as well as the impact of those policies on the content and workings of politics. According to Skocpol, the state officials most likely to pursue autonomous goals are "organizationally coherent collectivities of state officials, especially collectivities of career

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officials relatively insulated from ties to currently dominant socioeconomic interests" (ibid.). The specific factors responsible for state autonomy from society vary. Skocpol notes:

> The extranational orientations of states, the challenges they may face in maintaining domestic order, and the organizational resources that collectivities of state officials may be able to draw on and deploy—all of these features of the state . . . can help to explain autonomous state action. (Ibid., 9.)

Skocpol attributes much weight to the organizational capabilities of states:

> A state's means of raising and deploying financial resources tell us more than could any other single factor about its existing (and immediately potential) capacities to create or strengthen state organizations, to employ personnel, to co-opt political support, to subsidize economic enterprises, and to fund social programs. (Ibid., 17.)

Perhaps one reason Skocpol emphasizes the state's financial and military capacities is that she often sees state autonomy as a matter of forcibly imposing actions or policies upon a resistant public.[7] The success of such efforts would be ensured if (contrary to pluralist and Marxist accounts) the state had a source of revenue independent of, say, a particular social class or set of societal groups, and a military force that was willing and able to act against public manifestations of social disapproval of state policies.

This is a distinctly autocratic view of state-society interaction—one that seems to overlook the fact that the primary manifestations of societal (dis)approval in the modern era are electoral. In the modern age, the state's military and financial resources, or lack thereof, flow from (electoral) manifestations of societal opinion—positive or negative—rather than from the state's autonomy from such manifestations.

Although she does not acknowledge this macrotheoretical problem with her understanding of state autonomy, at the micro level Skocpol implicitly recognizes the limitations of NMST. In her review of the literature, Skocpol notes that the factors responsible for state autonomy often do not concern military or taxation capabilities. In her discussion of J. P. Nettle's "The State as a Conceptual Variable," the explanation Skocpol gives for the divergent degrees of autonomy enjoyed by the French and American states is their different constitutional traditions.

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Skocpol (1985, 22) concludes that "various sorts of states . . . give rise to various conceptions of the meaning and methods of 'politics' itself, conceptions that influence the behavior of all groups and classes in national societies." The importance of variables that lie outside the state's organizational and military capabilities suggests that a more successful version of NMST may need to appeal to other factors to fully account for why certain states gain autonomy from social preferences.

By using public ignorance as a central independent variable to explain state autonomy, the shortcomings of NMST could be mitigated. Such an approach also indicates when states may be dominated by society. Indeed, the flip side of public ignorance is that although the public is generally politically ignorant, this condition is not absolute. In modern democracies legislative personnel, in particular, face the possibility of removal if the public, for whatever reasons, rejects their bids for reelection. This creates (at least) two possible ways society may dominate the state. State actors can be evicted from office if they make mistakes that the public is aware of and rejects. Social domination of the state can also occur if states anticipate social mobilization against their policies. Even if the state enjoys ignorance-derived autonomy when it takes a specific action, state actors must often try to anticipate whether the public will become aware of actions it may reject, and then punish state actors at the ballot box.[8]

The Public's Ignorance of Politics

Studies of public opinion documenting the mass public's political ignorance paint a rather dismal picture of the average citizen in the industrialized West. They indicate that the overwhelming majority of the populace is ignorant not only of the content of the ideologies that dominate modern political discourse, but even of the most basic features of politics.

The first point was demonstrated in Philip Converse's groundbreaking paper, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics" (1964). Converse showed that most citizens exhibit a disturbing amount of political ignorance, and that there are striking differences between the levels of political knowledge possessed by the general public and the relatively sophisticated political elites. Unlike politicians and other members of the political elite, the public is grossly unaware of which issues "go together" ideologically. In a survey in which respondents were asked

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"What do the terms liberal and conservative mean to you?" only 17 percent of the respondents gave an answer that roughly coincided with an accurate description of the terms, and 37 percent could not name *any* difference between "liberal" and "conservative." Subsequent research has borne out Converse's finding that descriptions of political ideology such as the following were far from being the weakest that pollsters encounter:

> For some reason conservative gets identified with the South—identified with drabby looking clothes vs. more something I would wear, drabby clothes, too, but it is just a different type.
>
> Oh conservative. Liberal and conservative. Liberal and conservative. [. . .] I wouldn't know. [. . .] Liberal . . . liberal . . . liberal . . . liberal. And conservative. Well, if a person is liberal with their money they squander their money? Does it fall into that same category? (Neumann 1986, 120.)

The public's ignorance of politics is not restricted to its innocence of ideology. Many studies of voter behavior document the public's blatant misunderstanding of the most basic political issues and structures of government (Neumann 1986; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, ch. 2, and 1991; Bennett 1988). Localized political information, such as the names of senators and Congressional representatives, are also unknown to a majority of U.S. citizens. In 1989, approximately 70 percent of Americans could not name the senators of their home state, and 71 percent could not identify the member of Congress from their home district (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 94).

More important for present purposes, the public is often ignorant of the policies the state implements, and of whether their elected representatives support or oppose given policies (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 262–64). In one study, Barbara Hinckley (1980, 644) found that only 10 percent of voters in an NES survey could remember a single bill their representative voted on.[9]

Knowledge of foreign policy is equally abysmal. In 1964, at the height of the Cold War, only 38 percent of the American public knew that the Soviet Union was not a member of NATO (Page and Shapiro 1992, 10). In the 1980s, only 43 percent of surveyed Americans knew of the Strategic Defense Initiative, and a mere 22 percent knew it was U.S. policy to retaliate with nuclear weapons against a Soviet attack on Western Europe (ibid.). Following massive media coverage of the Geneva summit attended by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, a

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majority of Americans could not name the leader of the Soviet Union (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 62).

Public Ignorance and Heuristics

Although the public is often ignorant of political issues, many have argued that public knowledge of politicians' personal traits or the general stance of political parties reduces the amount of information the public needs to cast a relatively informed vote (Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991; Converse 1990; Zaller 1992; Page and Shapiro 1992; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1991 and 1993; Stimson 1990). Instead of devoting large amounts of effort to becoming familiar with dull and complicated issues, people use the positions of political parties or favored politicians as heuristics to reduce the amount of time and energy necessary to form an opinion about a given issue (but see Kuklinski and Quirk 2000, and Lau and Redlawsk 2001, for criticisms of the effectiveness of heuristics).

Although the extent to which the public uses information shortcuts may have important ramifications for the *malleability* of public opinion, their use does not radically alter the picture of a largely ignorant public and a largely autonomous state. Indeed, the public's use of heuristics may *enhance* state autonomy by conferring public approval on policies undertaken by trusted officials or parties, even if the policies, evaluated in their own right, might meet with public disapproval. Elite domination of mass opinion may create situations where state officials may actually dictate what the public's preferences will be, by shaping the heuristics in play. John Zaller's work, in particular, is replete with examples of public opinion following (not leading) the positions communicated by party leaders, even on such contentious issues as the Vietnam War (Zaller 1992).

Marxist State Theory

Because it interferes with the main societal check on democratically legitimized states, public ignorance seems far likelier to generate modern states' autonomy than the variables identified by previous forms of non-Marxist state theory. But despite Marx's tendency to reduce the state to the role of serving the interest of the dominant social class, some forms

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of neo-Marxist state theory begin, at least, to accord public ignorance an important role in providing state autonomy.

It is important to note at the outset that there is rampant disagreement among Marxists regarding the nature of the capitalist state. While Marx (like Engels and Lenin) is usually seen as advancing a non-autonomous account of the state, many take Marx's (and Engels's) various comments on the state as the basis for hypothesizing the relative autonomy of the capitalist state.

A comprehensive review of the numerous Marxist theories of the state is beyond the scope and purpose of this paper, and can be found elsewhere.[10] For present purposes, I have chosen to elaborate only on those theories that incorporate claims of autonomy in their analysis.

Marxist theories that treat the state as instrumental to the interests of the dominant class may be called instrumentalist Marxist state theories (IMSTs). Such treatments "stress the causal primacy of the individuals or social forces in charge of the state system—in the most extreme cases seeing the state system as a wholly neutral instrument" (Jessop 1990, 250). Such analyses contend that in capitalist societies the state's interests are intimately tied to capital. The state draws its funding from the bourgeoisie, is staffed by the bourgeoisie, and serves bourgeois interests (Marx 1972, 187). This view can be found in Marx's Preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and more recently in Ralph Miliband's *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969).

Although IMSTs view capitalist states as advancing the interests of the bourgeoisie, some of them see the bourgeoisie as often falling victim to a collective-action problem. The anarchy of production, and capitalists' willingness to pursue economic projects that are individually beneficial but that do not reflect their long-run collective interests, can create situations that potentially threaten the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. These instabilities occasionally require the state to act "contrary to the demands of a shortsighted, narrow minded bourgeoisie in order to safeguard capitalist relations of production and maintain political stability" (Nordlinger 1981, 47–48).

Yet in such instances the bourgeois state cannot simply act to further the true interests of capital. The state must counter the resources members of the capitalist class may direct toward opposing the state's efforts. The primary factor governing the state's ability to act autonomously is the relative strength or weakness of such resources.

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> *By way of exception*, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power, as ostensible mediator, acquires for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both. . . . Such was the Bonapartism of the First, and still more the Second French Empire, which played off the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. (Engels 1972, 753, emphasis added.)

Similarly, Trotsky (1973, 26) suggests that in Tsarist Russia, "it was not the equilibrium of the economically dominant classes, as in the West, but their weakness which made Russian bureaucratic autocracy a self-contained organization."

Although Marx and Trotsky allow that the capitalist state sometimes acts autonomously, such autonomy is not a regularly occurring feature of the capitalist state. Autonomy occurs only in exceptional situations, when the weakness or equilibrium of antagonistic classes creates room in which the state can maneuver.

Gramsci and Ideological Hegemony

Instrumental Marxist accounts of the capitalist state were early attempts to deal with recognized instances of state autonomy. However, the focus of such accounts on the strength or weakness of the bourgeoisie severely restricted the space they allowed the state for autonomous action. This is not true of the version of Marxist state theory Antonio Gramsci developed early in the twentieth century. Although a committed socialist, Gramsci was not satisfied with the explanatory power of traditional Marxist analysis. He recognized that such analysis failed to account for not only why the proletariat failed to overthrow capitalism in countries where it was highly advanced, but why proletarians appeared to become less militant over time. These phenomena led Gramsci to develop explanations of the weakness of radical modern social movements that went beyond those offered by conventional Marxist social analysis.

Although Gramsci continued to operate within the Marxist tradition, he introduced a concern with the role ideological superstructures had upon social interactions. Gramsci justified this theoretical move by arguing that the "hegemonic" ideology of the dominant (capitalist) class infuses the realm of culture—the superstructure that rests on the economic base. This hegemonic ideology is able to accomplish what the

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state's blunt coercive apparatuses would be unable to do: obtain the *active* consent of the dominated classes to the capitalist social system.

For Gramsci, intellectuals play a crucial role in determining the hegemonic ideology. Such intellectuals can be divided into two broad categories. There are "traditional" intellectuals, such as scientists and professors; and more importantly, there are "organic" intellectuals. Organic intellectuals, drawn from the ranks of each class, serve to define and clarify the interests of that class. Such intellectuals give a class "homogeneity and an awareness of its function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields" (Gramsci 1971, 5), and they attempt to advance the hegemony of their class over the rest of society (ibid., 12).

In capitalist societies the superstructure is dominated by intellectuals drawn from the capitalist class. This superstructure consists of two primary levels:

> the one that can be called "civil society," that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called "private," and that of "political society" or "the State." These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the State and "juridical" government. (Ibid.)

Yet for Gramsci the traditional distinctions between structure and superstructure, state and civil society, become blurred,[11] as both are involved in creating the mechanisms necessary for the continued reproduction of capitalist social relations through the hegemonic domination of the capitalist class.

> [Should not] the "State" . . . be understood not only [as] the apparatus of government, but also the "private" apparatus of "hegemony" or civil society? (Ibid.)

The seemingly imprecise division between state and society can be clarified given Gramsci's definition of the state. Gramsci writes:

> The state is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains their domination, *but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules.* (Ibid.)

In this definition Gramsci notes that since elements of society that are usually considered "private" serve to enforce the capitalist classes' domi-

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nation of society, such "private" elements need to be considered as part of the state. Gramsci's position is drawn out when he illustrates how the state's historical development, and hence the degree of hegemony enjoyed by the capitalist class, is often contingent upon the activities of "private" social organizations:

> In the (anyway superficial) polemic over the functions of the State (which here means the State as a politico-juridical organization in the narrow sense), the expression "the State as policeman". . . means a State whose functions are limited to safeguarding of public order and of respect for the laws. The fact is glossed over that in this form of regime . . . hegemony over its historical development belongs to private forces, to civil society—which is "State" too, indeed is State itself. (Ibid.)

The state's participation in the formation of the hegemonic superstructure of society is crucial, as it secures the active consent of the mass public to existing capitalist social relations. In this sense, both the private and public institutions of capitalist societies take roles in perpetuating class division.

> Gramsci assigned to the State part of this function of promoting a single (bourgeois) concept of reality, and, therefore, gave the State a more extensive (enlarged) role in perpetuating class. . . . It was not merely lack of understanding of their position in the economic process that kept workers from comprehending their class role, nor was it only the "private" institutions of society . . . that were responsible for keeping the working class from self-realization, but it was the *State itself* that was involved in reproducing the relations of production. . . . The State included the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the superstructure. (Carnoy 1984, 66.)

Gramsci believed that the resulting capitalist ideological hegemony served to explain why highly developed capitalist countries enjoyed more social stability, and a subsequent decline in overtly coercive activity by the politico-juridical state. In a discussion of the comparative revolutionary developments in Russia and Europe, Gramsci (1978, 199) argues that:

> the determination, which in Russia was direct and drove the masses onto the streets for a revolutionary uprising, in central and western Europe is complicated by all these political super-structures, created by the greater development of capitalism. This makes the action of the masses slower and more prudent, and therefore requires of the revolutionary party a

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> strategy and tactics altogether more complex and long-term than those which were necessary for the Bolsheviks in the period between March and November 1917.

Gramsci's analysis of hegemonic ideology recognizes that there are many arenas, in both civil and political society, that are responsible for the creation and synthesis of ideology. Yet

> the state has always been the protagonist of history. In its organs the power of the propertied class is centralized. Within the state, the propertied class forges its own discipline and unity, over and above the disputes and clashes of competition, in order to keep intact its privileged position in the supreme phase of competition itself: the class struggle for power, for pre-eminence in the leadership and ordering of society. (Gramsci 1977, 74.)

Ideological Innocence vs. Gramscian Hegemony

If anything, Gramsci goes too far in his correction of Marxist economism. It is hard to believe that ideological hegemony is even necessary in light of Converse's demonstration that the public is ignorant of the content of dominant political ideologies. Such ideological innocence indicates that the mass publics of industrial democracies are not aware of the philosophical rationales elites use to justify their class positions. If the proletariat's default position is no (political) consciousness, then generating false proletarian consciousness is a luxury in which the (allegedly) hegemonic capitalist class need not engage. And as their material position improves, the notion that class consciousness would occur to the workers naturally if not for hegemonic capitalist ideology loses whatever initial plausibility it might have had.

Indeed, the poorest and most disadvantaged citizens are the most ideologically unaware (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 255–58). Gramsci apparently never escaped the assumption that class consciousness is so natural that its absence must be explained by the intervention of some other ideology. This means that he never really came to grips with the social condition—working-class apathy—that he was trying to explain. More broadly—regardless of the specific society in question—one wonders why the ignorant public's "consent" must be anything but predominantly *inactive.*

The divergence in the use of ideology by elites and private citizens

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illustrates this point. Political elites tend to use a coherent set of unifying philosophical ideas to organize political information. These ideologies are constructed by acts of "creative synthesis" by people such as Marx (and Gramsci). Such ideologies make groupings of issues appear as "natural wholes," and help political elites determine which issues "go together" (Converse 1964, 211). By contrast, the average citizen is typically immersed in political ignorance, often using cues from opinion leaders (including, perhaps, cues to folkloric or commonsensical ideas) to compensate for their low level of awareness. Since the public is usually ignorant of the nature of the decision heuristics (such as political ideology) that opinion leaders use to determine their issue positions,[12] a modified, but more extreme, version of ideological hegemony seems to be at work. Far from actively accepting a hegemonic ideology, the public is not even aware of what ideology motivates the opinion leaders from which it takes its cues. The result is a disturbing combination of public inactivity and ignorance-derived subordination.[13]

Structural Marxist State Theory

Gramsci's work on philosophy, culture, and politics provided several conceptual tools that were used by subsequent theorists. Gramsci's theory of hegemony and state power served an important, albeit often-criticized, role in Nicos Poulantzas's structuralist account of the capitalist state. Structuralist approaches claim that "the social structure has no creative subject at its core. Rather the social formation is a system of objective processes without subjects. . . . Individuals are the 'supports' or 'bearers' of the structural relations in which they are situated" (Carnoy 1984, 89).

In *Political Power and Social Classes*, Poulantzas developed the most comprehensive structuralist account of the capital state.[14] Poulantzas (1978, 271) quickly dismisses IMST on the basis of its inconsistency with the historical examples of capitalist states found in Marx's writings:

> In Prussia during the particular period of transition from the feudal mode of production to the capitalist mode of production, the Bismarckian state took on a totally particular autonomy. . . . The autonomy of the state's structures allowed it to accomplish the passage from feudalism to capitalism against the politically dominant feudal class, by consolidating

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> the emerging economic domination of the bourgeois class and by elevating it to political domination. The Prussian state thus had an autonomy vis-à-vis the politically dominant feudal class and this autonomy cannot be reduced to equilibrium of force between the landed nobility and the bourgeoisie.

For Poulantzas (1978, 255), the capitalist state is characterized by "the *unity proper* to institutionalized political power and its *relative autonomy* [from economic classes]." The state's relative autonomy from social classes is crucial to the stability of capitalist societies, since the state acts as a "factor of cohesion between the levels of a social formation . . . and as the regulating factor of its global equilibrium as a system" (ibid., 44–45, emph. removed).

One of the capitalist state's functions is to impose a specific judico-political ideology upon its citizens. This ideology is one mechanism that masks the true class nature of social relations, isolating and splintering the cohesion of the working classes, which come to see other social agents as individuals, not as members of classes that may have contradictory interests.

However, this "isolation effect" also splinters the cohesion of the bourgeoisie, which suffers from an "incapacity to raise itself to the strictly political level [due] to its inability to achieve its own internal unity: it sinks into fractional struggles and is unable to realize its political unity on the basis of a politically conceived common interest" (Poulantzas 1978, 284). Enter the capitalist state, which is not marred by the disorganizing effects of class struggle. The state "takes charge, as it were, of the bourgeoisie's political interests and realizes the function of political hegemony which the bourgeoisie is unable to achieve. But *in order to do this, the capitalist state assumes a relative autonomy with regard to the bourgeoisie*" (ibid., 284–85). Poulantzas claims that its autonomy allows the state to intervene to arrange compromises with the dominated and dominant classes when the long-term interests of the dominant fraction are threatened (ibid., 285).

The state is able to arrange such compromises because of its ability to manipulate social actors' perceptions of its goals. The state "constantly appears as the strictly political unity of an economic struggle. . . . It presents itself as the representative of the 'general interest' of competing and divergent economic interests which conceal their class character from the agents who experience them" (Poulantzas 1978, 133). Al-

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though the state claims to advance the general interests of society, it is really advancing the long-term interest of the hegemonic class.

> The hegemonic class is the one which concentrates in itself, at the political level, the double function of representing the general interest of the people/nation and of maintaining a specific dominance among the dominant classes and fractions. (Ibid., 141.)

Poulantzas attributes state autonomy to two sources. The first is rooted in his functionalist explanation of the state's role in class-divided societies. Poulantzas (1970, 70) claims that "social classes and the State [are] *objective structures*, and their relations [are] an *objective system of regular connections*, a structure and a system whose agents, 'men', are in the words of Marx, 'bearers' of it—*träger.*" More specifically,

> [The state] presents a relative autonomy vis-à-vis the dominant classes and fractions, but it does this exactly to the extent that it possesses its own peculiar unity (unity of class power) as a specific level of the [capitalist mode of production] and of a capitalist formation. At the same time it possesses this institutionalized unity in so far as it is relatively autonomous from these classes or fractions, i.e. because of the function which devolves upon it vis-à-vis these classes or fractions. (Poulantzas 1978, 256.)

This explanation explicitly rejects the notion that state autonomy results from the will of individuals or social classes (ibid., 256–67). Instead the state is an objective structure that is functionally necessary for class-divided societies; "the function of the state is to maintain the global cohesion of a class-divided social formation. . . . The capitalist state is the first to specialize in this function through its structurally-determined capacity to secure hegemonic class leadership" (Jessop 1982, 181).

Such a structural account of the capitalist state leaves little room for human agency. However, after noting the structural features and requirements of the capitalist state, Poulantzas goes on to claim that state autonomy is contingent upon the specific historical arrangement of existing social forces.

> Thus, in its relations to the field of the class struggle, the capitalist state's relative autonomy depends on the characteristics peculiar to the economic and political class struggle in the [capitalist mode of production] and in a capitalist formation. This must be understood in the general sense of the relations between the structures and the field of the class

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> struggle. In this sense, the state sets the limits within which the class struggle affects it; the play of its institutions allows and makes possible this relative autonomy from the dominant classes and fractions. The variations and modalities of this relative autonomy depend upon the concrete relation between social forces in the field of the political class struggle; in particular, they depend on the political struggle of the dominated classes. (Poulantzas 1978, 289.)

This seems to indicate that the degree of state autonomy can be manipulated by the specific historical experience of class-divided societies. Poulantzas's recognition that history and specific social conditions are relevant for the state's autonomy stands in tension with the more structural elements of his analysis (Jessop 1982, 182–83). By introducing the specifics of the class/political struggles as an intervening variable that can influence state autonomy, Poulantzas opens his account to empirical verification. Indeed, at times Poulantzas is quite explicit regarding the importance of the political struggles of the dominated classes, and the effects such struggles have on the state's autonomy.

> However, in order concretely to take on this relative autonomy which, inscribed in the play of its institutions, is what is precisely necessary for hegemonic class domination, the state *is supported by* certain dominated classes of the society, in that it presents itself, through a complex ideological process, as their representative: it encourages them in various ways, to work against the dominant class or classes, but to the political advantage of these latter. In this way it succeeds precisely in *making* the dominated classes *accept* a whole series of compromises which appear to be *their* political interest. (Poulantzas 1978, 285.)

However, for the state to enlist the dominated classes to work against themselves and accept a series of compromises they believe to be in their political interest, the dominated classes must be aware of the state's policies and their class implications. In light of the public's well-documented ignorance, which is magnified among society's most disadvantaged members,[15] it is implausible that such political awareness exists.[16]

In light of public ignorance, the state might not have to mask possible class bias in its policies in order to convince the public that it is advancing a classless national interest. The public's rampant ignorance of state activities and policies strongly suggests that the mechanisms Poulantzas holds responsible for the permeation of false consciousness among the dominated classes cannot work. However, public ignorance

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also indicates that the state's autonomy may be more extreme than even Poulantzas is willing to recognize.

Beyond Marxist State Theory

That state personnel often engage in autonomous actions is a powerful insight that remains underdeveloped to this day. While recognizing such autonomy, neither Marxist nor non-Marxist approaches to state theory offer convincing explanations of how democratic states achieve it. How can they be autonomous from electoral preferences? Non-Marxist state theory tends to omit democracy itself in its account of autonomous states. Its focus on the state's organizational, military, and taxation capabilities may be appropriate for premodern state structures,[17] but slights the electorally democratic features of the modern state that are—at least nominally—the very stuff of its existence.

By contrast, neo-Marxist theories about the state's ideological manipulation of the mass public are attempts to deal with the democratic features of modern states. However, the Marxist tradition within which these theories operate constricts their examination of democratic institutions. Although Gramsci and Poulantzas recognize that the political culture propagated either by the state or by the hegemonic fraction of the bourgeoisie often misleads the *demos*, the specific mechanisms they hold responsible for such domination are dubious. Far from any active endorsement or consent, the static ignorance of the mass public seems likely to be responsible for its acceptance of the state's ideological agenda.

Because recent approaches to state theory fail to identify the most likely possible cause of democratic states' autonomy, public ignorance is a useful independent variable for future studies of state action. One of the advantages of such studies is that they could provide clear criteria for when modern democratic states are constrained by society. Such constraint is exercised when public opinion is mobilized against a specific policy or actor. Although the empirical evidence seems to indicate that the public is rarely capable of such mobilization independently of opinion leaders, opinion leaders (such as interest groups) may also effectively constrain state actors with the *potential* mobilization of latent opinion (e.g. Zaller 1994, 284–86).

Taking account of the role of public opinion in the interactions between democratic states and societies is crucial for achieving an accu-

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rate understanding of the modern state's operation. The public's pervasive political ignorance, and its frequent reliance upon state-situated opinion leaders, provides a sound empirical basis for expecting even modern states to operate autonomously from the societies they govern.

NOTES

1. I wish to qualify this claim by noting that previous pluralist research often recognized the existence of state autonomy (see Almond 1988, 854, 855). My contention is simply that states and state autonomy were not the focus of their studies. I do not intend to suggest that this research be denigrated. Quite the contrary, the interactions between states and interest groups, both of which may enjoy autonomy derived from public ignorance, may be a fruitful and empirically accurate perspective for state-society interactions.
2. See for example Amsden 1992, Bates 1981, Cummings 1984, and Johnson 1987.
3. State autonomy as derived from public ignorance has been noted previously. See Friedman 1997, 455–56, and Sorens 2000, 26.
4. For the purposes of this essay, I will essentially follow Weber and define the state as a collectivity of individuals who determine and undertake activities from which there is considered—by most members of "society"—to be no legitimate appeal. Although this definition may seem to load the dice in favor of state autonomy, the principle that is supposed to legitimize the authoritative activities of the state is, in democratic societies, public opinion—the will of society—as manifested in popular elections.
5. Often referred to as "state-centered state theory," I have chosen to use the "non-Marxist" designation to avoid possible confusion regarding the redundancy of the former term.
6. See Nordlinger 1981, Krasner 1984, and Skowronek 1984.
7. However, Skocpol (1985, 22) also notes that states "not only conduct decision-making, coercive, and adjudicative activities in different ways, but also give rise to various conceptions of the meaning and methods of 'politics' itself."
8. See Arnold 1990.
9. Some have argued that measuring levels of information possessed by members of the public may underestimate the amount of knowledge they actually possess. According to this view, individuals have running tallies of evaluations that process information, enabling them to make judgments and then forget the specific reasons for their evaluations, which they retain "on line." Unfortunately, research (McGraw, Lodge, and Stroh 1989) has demonstrated that the on-line model is typically used by the politically sophisticated; "those less involved in politics, however, are not as motivated to engage in on-line processing of information" (Rahn, Krosnick, and Breuning 1994, 587).

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10. For comprehensive overviews see Jessop 1982 and 1990, Carnoy 1984, and Van den Berg 1988.
11. At one point Gramsci (1971, 160) allows that, "in actual reality, civil society and the State are the same thing." See Anderson 1977 for a discussion of the conflicting definitions Gramsci gives of the state.
12. It seems likely that the public's ignorance of state representatives' use of political ideology may contribute much to the perceived legitimacy of Western democratic states.
13. This is not to suggest that ideology is a particularly effective decision heuristic for reaching policy positions.
14. See also Poulantzas [1978] 2000.
15. In one such study, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) found significant gaps in the political knowledge held by the poor, women, and ethnic minorities. A series of survey questions conducted in 1989 found that men were 1.35 times more likely to answer correctly than women, the affluent 1.59 times more likely than the poor, and whites twice as often as African Americans (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 157).
16. It is likely that Poulantzas would claim that political ignorance is the effect of the structural autonomy of the capitalist state, and not its cause.
17. It is possible that this focus is due to Skocpol's attention to premodern states in her doctoral thesis, *States and Social Revolutions* (1979). I am indebted to Jefferey Friedman for this suggestion.

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Rogan Kersh

STATE AUTONOMY & CIVIL SOCIETY: THE LOBBYIST CONNECTION

ABSTRACT: *The much-noted decline of "state autonomy" theories owes partly to external challenges to state power, such as globalization, supranational regimes, and the like. But advanced democratic states have also long been seen as threatened from* within, *especially by powerful private interest groups. The extent of private-interest influence on policy making depends in important part on corporate lobbyists, a group whose activities are chronicled in this essay. Lobbyists exercise considerably more autonomy from the private clients who hire them than has previously been acknowledged. This portrait ultimately suggests that the national state and civil society may be mutually supportive rather than strictly separate spheres.*

Whither the "autonomous state"? The phrase registers as strangely dated in contemporary scholarship on state capacities and state-society relations. Instead of the potent sovereign entity portrayed by the state-autonomy school[1] during its full bloom in the 1970s and 1980s, today accounts of "weak," "overburdened," "broken-down," and "limited" states are prevalent, culminating in a rash of studies with titles like "The Ending of the Nation-State."[2] Part of the decline of state-autonomy theories doubtless owes to the regular ebb and flow of scholarly fashions. But political events, particularly those surrounding the unexpected breakup of the Soviet state, also contributed to the paradigm's fall from

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currency. Joel Migdal's broad review of state theory portrays autonomy theories as swiftly receding in the face of "the winds of globalization, supranational entities, and divisive ethnic conflict"; he concludes that "the twenty-first century state . . . must be stripped of its myths of unity and omnipotence" (Migdal 1997, 222).

Some states, particularly in advanced industrial democracies, seem better situated to resist the challenges of global economic and other external forces. But an *internal* challenge to these well-developed states' autonomy remains in force. Interest groups, primarily those representing corporate and other private concerns, were portrayed as early as the 1960s as having "captured" various sectors of the U.S. state, through iron-triangle and other mutual-exchange arrangements (see esp. Lowi 1969)—a malign version of the previously dominant, pluralist celebration of interest-group hegemony. Though the triangle metaphor has been largely discarded, the idea that state officials—especially members of Congress, but also White House staffers, agency bureaucrats, and even judges—are constrained by powerful interest groups informs a massive body of research.[3] Studies of campaign spending, policy development and outcomes, and interest-group politics, among other subfields, often emphasize the influence on state policies exercised by private actors. Thus an additional factor in the demise of state-autonomy ideas, particularly affecting the more developed democratic states, may be that state theorists never managed to overcome the widespread perception that the private and public interests making up "civil society"[4] block, hinder, and otherwise limit state authority.

If state policy makers are significantly influenced by societal group preferences, the key catalysts in that exchange are interest-group representatives, who convey private aims to public officials (and vice versa). Lobbyists' consistently low ratings in the public eye owe much to their putative sway over government officials, arousing charges of corruption, unequal influence, and "demosclerosis."[5] In the face of ceaseless assaults by the tens of thousands of lobbyists active in Washington, the notion that state actors enjoy anything like discretion in their work may indeed seem to miss the mark.

This essay investigates lobbyists in their role as the link between interest groups and state officials. I look at one particular aspect of interest-group representatives' work: the relationship between lobbyists and the clients who hire them to press their cases before the state. My argument is that the ostensibly overwhelming influence of private-sector interests on state affairs looks considerably less extensive in practice than

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is presumed in much relevant scholarship (and journalistic accounts of policy making). This is because lobbyists themselves are "autonomous" vis-à-vis their clients in meaningful ways: rather than faithfully bringing powerful pressures to bear on state actors, lobbyists act in ways designed to maximize their own discretion. As a result, state actors may have more space to exercise authority free of private pressure than current scholarship recognizes.

Individual lobbyists, it should be noted, are an afterthought in most accounts of interest groups and policy making. Lobbyists are assumed to promote their clients' interests, usually along narrow lines, by trying to influence officials' decisions. Just as many versions of public-choice theory treat the state as simply a register of private interests, social scientists generally treat the lobbyist as simply a transmitter of the preferences of an element of civil society, or an agent of private-sphere organizations—in economic jargon, lobbyists' "principals."[6] The usual relationship is specified as follows:

Client *Interest* → Lobbyist *Action* → Public-official *Target* → Policy *Outcome*

Lobbyists thus appear as vehicles for their clients' interests, laboring to modify legislators' preconceived positions on an issue. In this view, the real actors to watch in analyzing policy making are state officials and, in an abstract sense, the private interests that affect their decisions to a greater or lesser degree.

This view permits econometric modeling of the "contract" or "quid pro quo" between legislators and private groups.[7] "In most cases," according to a typical study, "special interest[s] want legislators to vote against constituency preferences" (Stratmann 1998, 88). Although such conceptions seem more conducive to analytic convenience (A, the interest group, is directly opposed to B, the constituent, providing legislators with a neat dichotomous choice) than to the description of actual legislative interplay or outcomes, even the more nuanced studies of lobbying follow this outline and present interest-group representatives as creatures of client imperatives.[8]

In practice, lobbyists do not simply register the views of others, acting in lockstep obedience to the "special interests" who hire them. Instead, like other actors in the policy sphere, they pursue interests of their own. These include retaining clients, and/or adding new ones; bolstering their reputation in the Washington policy community, for

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reasons of status, future employment prospects, and so on; and promoting "good" public policy, as they define it. None of these goals are necessarily furthered by faithfully striving to match their clients' preferences to the policy positions of their target audience. To understand what lobbyists do and why, it is not enough to know the interest(s) they represent or the set of preconceived positions they are seeking to alter.

This is not to say that interest-group representatives ignore their clients' preferences. But ample space for discretionary activity exists—enough, indeed, that state officials may be less bound by private interests' imperatives than those officials' frequent interactions with lobbyists appear to affirm. Clients' "interests," as we shall see, are often so vague as to amount to little of substance. Many lobbyists actually spend a great deal of time *shaping* their clients' preferences, even creating interests where none apparently existed before; and where strong client preferences exist, lobbyists often work as hard to change them as they do to influence their putative targets' views. Many interest-group representatives most resemble independent trustees more than agents of their sponsoring firm, trade association, or individual clients.[9]

The method employed in this study of lobbyist activity is an unconventional one. Most interest-group research relies on multivariate regressions to test theories about lobbyist-legislator interactions, with the data derived from surveys and, less often, interviews. My approach is instead based on sustained direct observation of lobbyists and public officials.[10] Between January 1999 and the present, I followed a group of 11 Washington, D.C., health-care lobbyists as they carried out their regular professional activities. Although I also interviewed many other interest-group representatives and their clients, as well as members of Congress and their staffers, executive-branch officials, and journalists who cover interest groups, the heart of my study is participant observation of the 11 lobbyists.[11]

Lobbyist-Client Relations: Creating a Space for Autonomy

Lobbyists' autonomy as policy actors attracted a modicum of scholarly interest in the 1950s, when functionalist studies portrayed a certain type of Washington actor—the Clark Clifford-style "fixer," or lawyer-lobbyist—as "a principal interpreter between government and private person,

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explaining to each the needs, desires, and demands of the other." This description, originally proposed by the Washington lawyer Charles Horsky, emphasized the autonomy enjoyed by some interest-group actors owing to their "middleman" role as mediator between private and public.[12]

John P. Heinz et al. update this characterization in their landmark study, *The Hollow Core* (1993). The authors argue persuasively that only a handful of Washington lobbyists may be described as independent "mediators." Less convincingly, they draw a clear distinction between interest-group representatives located within a professional organization (such as a corporation or trade association) and "external representatives" who fit the independent-actor model. Their conclusion: the large majority of lobbyists, those "serving large corporate actors," generally "*lack the autonomy from clients* that is a necessary condition of the mediator role." According to their analysis, "the fact that most client organizations are directly involved in representation through their own officers implies that the organizations exercise close control over the objectives and strategies involved in representation . . . [by] monitoring of employee behavior." Therefore most lobbyists' freedom to act in the policy sphere is severely curtailed by their clients' directives: "Few Washington representatives have a substantial degree of autonomy."[13]

The authors base this claim on an extensive set of interviews and surveys of individual interest-group actors, but their data do not reveal how lobbyists actually carry out their orders. Is there a close match between client interests/directives and lobbyist efforts? Or does substantial independent activity in fact occur: do lobbyists work on issues unrelated to client interests? Do they cut deals with policy makers that benefit the client less than might have been possible? Do they perform "show horse" meetings on Capitol Hill that typically impress clients without advancing their interests in any specific way? Room for such creative activities could be opened by a number of factors: the fluid nature of the policy process, interest-group representatives' individual initiative and/or lobbying style, interests or ideologies they may hold independently of (and sometimes superseding) client preferences, and the clients' lack of substantive policy knowledge.

My observation of hundreds of lobbyist-client interactions[14] strongly suggests that in practice, lobbyists enjoy immense autonomy. Most clients possess a very limited understanding of Washington policy activity and of government decisions, even those directly affecting their interests; and countervailing pressures draw lobbyists away from acting as

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stewards of their clients' preferences. The theoretically perfect match of interests between client and lobbyist is disrupted regularly. The supply of preferences and directives from clients is limited by their ignorance of the policy realm, and lobbyists face considerations that inhibit their inclination to carry out a client's bidding. Let us take each of these points up in turn.

How Ignorance Secures Autonomy

Most corporate clients, far from serving as a "dominant force shaping the work" of lobbyists,[15] exhibit scant awareness of the issues and strategies involved in their representatives' Washington activity. Whatever policy knowledge these clients do have is obtained largely from their lobbyists themselves through memos, e-mail exchanges, and telephone conversations. Clients likewise display limited understanding of how lobbyists ply their trade on Capitol Hill and in regulatory agencies. Of a group of several dozen clients I interviewed, even the two who were the most active in Washington, travelling there four or more times a year, were, in one's words, "essentially blind here without [my lobbyist]. You could say that [she] is my eyes, ears, and other senses here in the capital." Conversely, all of the 11 lobbyists I followed referred at one time or another to the need to "educate" their clients.

Empirically measuring clients' relative lack of knowledge of the substance of policy, and of how particular policies may affect their business or other concerns, is beyond the scope of my study. But the limits of their knowledge are constantly evident, whether in listening to one lobbyist patiently explain a policy option or political strategy, or in watching another give rudimentary lectures on "how the Washington policy process works" to a group of corporate managers and partners. Indeed, when I asked each of the clients I interviewed, "What are your top priorities in terms of Washington policy?" most responded with a version of: "Whatever our firm's lobbyists say they are."

Translating private interests into the language of Capitol Hill or an executive agency is a profoundly complex matter, suffused with ambiguity. Lobbyists quickly become skilled at interpreting that ambiguity creatively. I routinely observed incidents like the following: Lobbyist #3, representing an insurance-company client, described the legislative prognosis for an arcane Medicare reimbursement change—

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one her client supported—three different ways: neutrally to her fellow health-care lobbyists at a morning coalition meeting; more positively to a House Budget Committee staffer over lunch (the provision was then in the Ways & Means Committee, and a staffer there had asked the lobbyist to "help smooth the [proposal's] reception" with Budget Committee staff), and gloomily ("I don't think this is going to happen [in the House]") to the client company's vice president that afternoon. "I'm dampening expectations," she said with a shrug after I asked her about the latter conversation. "I can explain the outcome persuasively whatever happens, since he [the client] doesn't understand the political side of this very well, and . . . I'll get the credit, or more of the credit, if it goes through."

Lobbyists' knowledge-based autonomy from their clients is also evident in more oblique ways. On several occasions I accompanied lobbyists during trips to Washington by their out-of-town clients, who needed to testify before Congress or meet public officials on behalf of some policy concern. Many of these visitors, whether in "pre-briefings" by their lobbyists or in speaking with policy makers, resembled nothing so much as nervous tourists in a foreign country. Their lobbyists not only knew the Washington turf intimately, but frequently appeared to understand their clients' business better than the clients did—or at least knew how to explain that business in ways that mattered to public officials. "Back home," one trade-association representative told me after four of her hospital-system clients spent two days visiting legislators' offices to seek Medicare regulatory changes, "these guys are swaggering Texans." In Washington, though, their hats and boots seemed almost to shrink, along with the men wearing them. At dinner following the group's first day on the Hill, the lobbyist followed standard Washington insider practice and reserved an aisle table at the Capital Grille, a steak-and-cigars restaurant popular with legislators from both parties. As the evening wore on, a few passing Senators and House members stopped at the table to exchange pleasantries and meet the hospital executives; the visitors positively glowed. "For—what? A few 'hellos' from the same politicians those guys bash all the time back home, and they'll [the clients] be eating out of my hand for the next six months," the lobbyist told me afterwards. Despite no immediate Congressional resolution of the clients' issue concerns (as with most such visits), they judged the trip a "big success," in the words of the hospitals' CEO.

Rather than being faithful agents of client-principals with a strong

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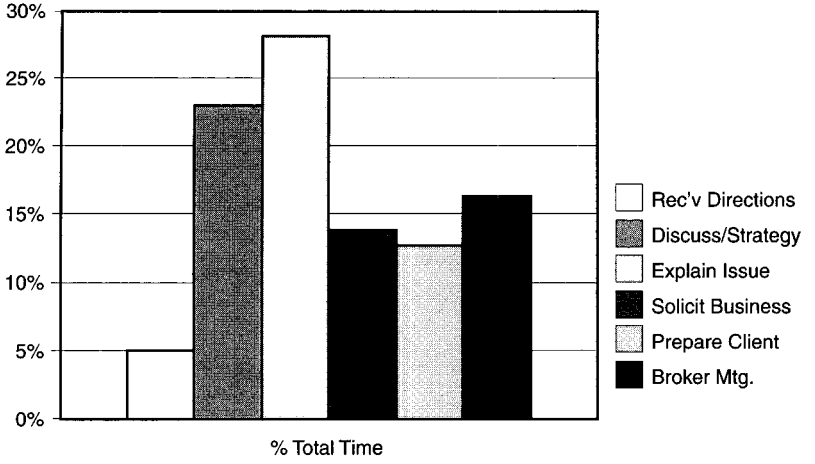
Figure 1. How Lobbyists Spend Their Time



set of established preferences about policies and how to pursue them, lobbyists are able to exercise considerable discretion in their work. Figure 1 provides systematic accounting of this point, by displaying the percentage of time each of the 11 lobbyists spent on various client-related activities.[16]

This chart indicates the paucity of time lobbyists spend receiving "directions" from clients on how to carry out their duties.[17] Only 5 percent of the lobbyist/client interactions I witnessed involved what most research presumes—implicitly, for the most part—to be the salient basis of these exchanges. In contrast, lobbyists spent the most time, nearly 30 percent, explaining issues to their clients, a duty that typically involves much *creating* of preferences and interests. They spent another 13 percent of their time preparing clients for Washington meetings—a sort of "principal-agent" exchange, to be sure, but with the roles reversed. And the significant proportion of their time (23 percent) that lobbyists devoted to mutual discussion of an issue was curiously short on detailed strategy and planning for lobbying campaigns, on and off Capitol Hill. Lobbyists do strategize in detail, but most of that work occurs independently of the client. "Better to explain the thing to [my clients] after I've got it pretty well sorted out myself," summarized Lobbyist Number 7.

The amount of time (14 percent) lobbyists spent soliciting business is also noteworthy. Lobbying- or law-firm representatives, whose income depends on signing up their own clients, were no more active

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in this area than were trade-association or single-firm corporate lobbyists. This finding appears to contradict the account of Heinz et al., who predict clear differences in client "control" among lobbyists of various types. I found that lobbyists working for a single corporation were no more likely to receive directions from their clients (somewhat less, in fact: 4 percent of the time spent with clients) than were trade-association or independent representatives. And single-firm representatives spent as much time (31 percent) explaining issues to their clients as did their peers in other types of firms.

While client directives occupy a small proportion of lobbyists' time, this demonstrates little about the relative *importance* of the lobbyists' work load. Further insight may be gained by analyzing how ardently lobbyists represent their clients' interests once these are reasonably well delineated, a question I am still investigating. During my assessment of lobbyist/client encounters, I identified 171 examples of clearly articulable client policy interests. These ranged from the microlevel ("find out whether Senator A sent a particular letter to the FDA") to the very general ("investigate the issue of uninsured Americans"). In consultation with lobbyists and, where possible, their clients, I ranked items based on their importance. An intriguing initial finding: lobbyists were wholly or primarily responsible for identifying 126 of the 171 client interests, or almost three-quarters; clients originated less than a tenth of their own "interests."

The foregoing should not imply that lobbyists often depart radically from their clients' ideological predispositions. But within that broad context ("oppose new government regulations," for example), ample room exists for wielding significant discretion—deciding what issues to emphasize, how to do so, when to make concessions, and so forth. Many lobbyists regularly exercise that discretion, and work as hard at "spinning" their clients or corporate supervisors as they do the legislators and bureaucrats they are hired to influence.

Interest-group researchers, in their quest for empirical purchase on the slippery topic of lobbyists' policy influence, sometimes measure various groups' wins or losses in legislative battles. The results presumably yield important findings about the relative influence of different interests. But despite over 40 years' worth of such investigation,[18] most such analyses fall far short of their aim. Added to the difficulty of isolating interest-group influence, given the numerous other variables at play, is the more subtle problem of how to determine a "win" or "loss" on an issue. Lobbyists are generally as adept at claiming

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credit or avoiding blame as are most legislators.[19] Ambiguity shrouds clear accountability on most issues; little wonder that researchers have difficulty identifying interest-group winners and losers, much less determining the causes of their success or failure.

One representative example arises out of debates over the privacy of individuals' medical records and other health information, a critical issue during the 106th Congress. Central to legislative deliberations on the issue were two lobbyists, each acknowledged leaders in their respective camps; they had faced off on numerous occasions, in person and in the trade press. Each was able to claim victory (privately, to me, as well as in public) at a number of turns in the 1999–2000 round of the privacy dispute; moreover, each mentioned to me in passing that she had "never lost a major legislative battle." Given that the two were regularly in direct opposition on so many issues, their claims seem absurd (by one side, at least). Yet pressed further on specific instances, each could persuasively explain how an apparent loss was in fact a victory. And, in later interviews, clients of each lobbyist made similar judgments.

The average lobbyist is often helped in claiming victory by two factors. First, as Congressional researchers well know, House and Senate committee and roll-call votes are highly malleable. Multiple votes on the same topic provide cover for members of Congress (MCs) on different sides of an issue (Sinclair 1997). This institutional mechanism conveniently aids lobbyists in much the same way. Second, unlike MCs, lobbyists are not formally required to take strong positions in public (or, more important, with their clients) on most policy issues. If a bill the lobbyist supported is defeated, it is usually possible—and not necessarily disingenuous—to claim victory in terms of limiting damages, or helping exempt one's clients from the bill's ostensible harm. Much of the time, therefore, attempting to conclude whether an individual lobbyist lost on a given issue is an unrewarding task. Clients are poorly positioned to make definitive judgments about lobbyists' accountability.

Among the lobbyists I followed, some repeatedly employed the language of "us" (meaning public officials and the lobbyists) and "them" (referring to their private clients) in what initially seemed peculiar ways. This seems to be a shrewd route to long-term lobbying success: by favoring officials on some issues, a lobbyist can position herself to push for client benefits when really necessary. But most

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lobbyists have further incentives to create distance between their actions and client preferences.

Why Lobbyists Want Autonomy

In an interview, a former Senate committee staffer turned lobbyist told me that "the alliances don't always play out the way you would think. I'm a lot closer to folks on the Hill than I am my boss in [corporate headquarters]. There's things they know about my issues that my boss doesn't have the faintest idea about; and there's plenty of times when I'm looking after *their* [legislators'] interests instead of sticking hard to the corporate line." As this quotation suggests, most Washington lobbyists inhabit the "Beltway" system of policy actors, and therefore are inclined to define clients' interests at least partly in terms of what plays best in the capital, rather than what the client might find most desirable. Typically lobbyists have worked on Capitol Hill or in an executive-branch agency before passing into the private sphere, and their professional peers are predominantly fellow policy wonks and politicos, not the outside-the-Beltway clients they represent. This competing set of allegiances is cemented by interest-group representatives' all-too-human desire to be respected members of their peer community. Similar effects appear among legislators who "go native" in Washington, becoming less attuned to constituent concerns; and among Supreme Court justices whose views after joining the Court tilt leftward relative to their prior decisions, as they seek to appeal to a new, comparatively liberal peer group of law professors and clerks.[20]

One anecdote may underscore this point. I observed from its inception a coalition of health-care lobbyists, most representing corporate interests but also some representing consumer groups, organized around the prominent issue of Medicare prescription drug benefits. The coalition comprised over 40 members covering a wide range of interests. At the outset, weekly meetings tended to feature impassioned pleas for compromise, including one fractious gathering at which a pharmaceutical-company representative was openly urged by a fellow lobbyist to "forget the home crowd [e.g., his corporate client] for awhile; we need you on this proposal." He evidently found this a compelling argument, dropping his opposition thereafter to a specific coalition policy proposal. Two other members, one representing consumer groups and another small health-care businesses, proved insufficiently cooperative and

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were dropped from the coalition: as the director told me afterwards, "They couldn't get past their members"—suggesting that other lobbyists in the group *were* able to balance their clients' interests and allegiance to the coalition.

This Washington mindset, and the related quest for status within an issue community, constitutes one of three primary reasons that lobbyists may be inclined to stray from the faithful representation of client interests. The other two: lobbyists' imperative to retain clients, which (seemingly paradoxically) often leads them to diverge from simply satisfying clients' overt concerns; and their desire to affect policy in line with their personal preferences, even though those sometimes conflict with their clients' views. A brief treatment of each follows.

No matter what their organizational base—law firm, corporation, consumer group, trade association, etc.—virtually all lobbyists are engaged in a competition for clients. This dynamic is most evident among independent lobbyists and those who represent law firms or lobbying firms, as their livelihood depends on a continual stream of business. But even single-firm corporate lobbyists, such as those identified earlier in the passages from Heinz et al., compete for client attention. Their struggle may be with other lobbyists in the firm, or to raise their own salience in the client's eyes: as one client told me, "Washington policy is usually near the bottom of my priorities, until a crisis hits." The nearly continuous competitive pressure leads lobbyists at times to discount many short-term client interests ("fix this provision") in favor of securing longer-run ties. Lobbyist Number 5 put the point thus:

> Suppose some client wants me to do something for him, on issue X. Now, I can go up there [to Capitol Hill] and, if the breaks fall my way, I can probably get what he wants done, and collect my $5000 or so. . . . And maybe I'll hear from him again on [another issue] in a year or two, if ever. That's no good. . . . Instead, what I'll do is dig around some on that issue and get back to him and say "Well, this isn't moving [in Congress] for a few months, though I'll keep working on it behind the scenes. But in the mean time, you ought to be aware that all these other issues—Y and Z and A and B—are coming down the pike, and these could really affect your business." And then I'll meet with him, and convince him I'm the one to handle all these, and draw up a contract for a $40,000 or $50,000 annual retainer.

The point here—one that is strangely overlooked in the relevant scholarship, given its recent focus on economic self-interest—is that

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lobbyists care about retaining clients for as long as possible. If legislative or administrative policy outcomes were reasonably predictable (or reliably malleable), it might be possible to bank on satisfying clients' immediate interests, provided that these could be clearly translated into policy demands. But the extreme uncertainty coloring most policy debates (Heinz et al. 1993, 358–59) leads lobbyists to deal with clients in much the same way that they do legislators. They define and frame issues for clients, subtly altering their promises and predictions as time goes on. They claim credit for all manner of "achievements"; I witnessed one lobbyist informing a client that he had persuaded a member of Congress disliked by the client to retire (actually, the lobbyist had heard the news from a staffer the night before).

Occasionally a lobbyist will deliver a client an unambiguous victory. But these instances are so rare—despite the vast body of writing about the "special-interest" stranglehold over national policy making[21]—that clients' interests are usually translated into policy demands in extremely elastic ways. And where possible, clients' preferences are manipulated to serve *lobbyists'* interests: in holding existing clients' attention, and in signing up new ones; in enhancing their reputation within Washington policy circles; and in promoting good public policy as they see it. This last goal is the hardest to specify, but is the most directly relevant to our analysis of civil society and state autonomy.

Much as some members of Congress are deeply involved with certain of the policies they debate and vote on,[22] most of the lobbyists I followed had strong ideological predispositions that affected their work. The distinction between pursuing clients' interests and advocating policies distinct from (and even opposed to) these is usually a subtle one, but it is apparent in practice. Most of "my" 11 lobbyists display evident relish when they take up issues about which they care a great deal. I followed one representative (Number 4) whose background included long service on the staff of a staunchly liberal Democratic senator. She was sometimes discouraged by her subsequent work for the Washington office of a multinational health-care company that was populated mostly by conservative Republican colleagues. In 1998 an issue arose that allowed her to lobby for a more liberal goal, and she admitted that "I'll work on this to the exclusion of a lot of things I should be doing instead—then I play catch-up for awhile, [a time] during which I feel like I'm going through withdrawal or something." Another lobbyist represents drug- and alcohol-

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rehabilitation interests for personal reasons. "This causes me serious problems with my [lobbying] firm," she said. "They represent beer and wine distributors, and other clients who don't much like my advocacy of [the] Betty Ford [Clinic]. But [the firm's director] knows that I'll leave the firm before I give this up."

Should their clients find lobbyists' autonomy troubling? The transaction cost of monitoring Washington activity is high, and granting lobbyists substantial room to operate may be a form of Downsian-style rational ignorance.[23] But my conversations with clients lead me to suspect that they would be surprised by the degree of discretion their representatives wield. More worrisome from the clients' perspective might be the fact that when lobbyists' own goals and one or more of these client desires come into direct conflict, the former frequently take precedence—though in subtle ways.

To summarize this section's claims: many clients are only vaguely aware of federal government activity, and receive most policy information from their lobbyists; interest-group representatives seek status and other professional rewards among Washington policy makers, often more so than among their corporate colleagues in far-off Chicago or New York or California; they "spin" issues so as to secure long-term client relationships or better positions; and at least some lobbyists care deeply about "good" policy, defined independently of their private clients' interests. Taken together, these claims upset a foundational assumption of much contemporary interest-group research: that lobbyists neutrally transmit civil-society interests to the state. Given Washington representatives' multiple competing motivations, it might more accurately be said that lobbyists constitute independent elements of civil society—or even elements of the state itself.

Interest-group researchers rarely conceive of lobbyists as aligned with state actors to any meaningful degree, but the notion is present in some prominent scholarship. Robert Salisbury emphasizes, in contrast to the more familiar view of interest-group representatives as creatures of their clients, lobbyists' "need and dependence" on government officials (1990, 229). And Fred McChesney's examination (1997) of the group/official relationship concludes that politicians successfully "extort" contributions and other benefits from interest groups, in part through close relationships with lobbyists. Both these views, along with a few others (e.g., Ainsworth 1997), conceive of lobbyists as quasi*subjects* of the state, a version of "capture" theory in reverse. My own observations of lobbyists' daily interactions with public officials suggest that a

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strong degree of symbiosis exists, marking a more complex connection between representatives of the state and of the private sphere. I conclude with a look at this potential intermediate ground linking state and society.

State Autonomy through Societal Influence

The wholesale turn, over the past decade or so, from a view of states as powerful, autonomous entities leaves an intriguing vacuum in the study of state capacities and functions. Traditionally, state autonomy has been expressed as being in a zero-sum contest with the power of society; much of the "autonomy" literature took as fundamental that public officials exercised authority over (and worked independently from) private actors,[24] in deliberate distinction from pluralists' iron-triangle account of bureaucrats "captured" by corporate and other private interests. It is not merely coincidence that a resurgence of scholarly and popular attention to civil society accompanied the recent decline of the state-autonomy view.[25] This and other emerging scholarly trends may signal a return to an older pluralist portrait of states as simply another form of association, alongside the private- and public-interest groups making up civil society.[26]

This essay's account of interest-group lobbyists at work might counsel prudence in the face of a rush back towards the "society-centered reductionist pattern" (Almond 1988, 860) originally rejected by state-autonomy thinkers. Perhaps an alternative option is to conceive of state-society relations not as a Manichean opposition, or—more subtly—as a network of mutual checks and balances, but in terms of interrelations of state and society in which intermediaries—lobbyists—may exercise an autonomy from societal interests that is comparable to, and operationally indistinguishable from, state-theoretic autonomy; and that, moreover, sometimes amounts to cooptation by an autonomous state.

Less radically, might the national state and civil society be viewed not as separate spheres, but as instruments of mutual empowerment?[27] Such a perspective is untenable in much contemporary social-science theory, which (in one summary account) "equate[s] the strength of the state with its autonomy from society and with the ability of state elites to ignore other social actors or to impose their will in any simple manner on society" (Wang 1999, 231). Analysts outside the academy similarly view civil-society activity as a "realm beyond the state" (Novak 1996,

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3).[28] Strong theoretical rationales exist for strictly separating these spheres in principle. But a more integrative approach to state and society appears to reflect a substantial proportion of actual political practice.

To take the U.S. case, the national state, and related organizations such as political parties, have long fostered "civil society" exchanges among citizens, from affective bonds to economic ties, in part by providing resources to develop local activity into associational networks across state and regional borders. State actors' efforts to secure civil freedoms helped produce the gains that were registered in this area by African Americans, some other minority groups, and the mass of white citizens across much of U.S. history. Though limited in its infrastructure and many other respects, the early state was an animating source of local political participation, aiding rather than restraining Americans' developing civil society.[29] The dual-federalist arrangement of U.S. power has evolved since, but setting and enforcing uniform standards, restraining destructive competition among the federated states or among interest groups, mediating controversial issues of economic and social justice, and providing for the security of minority groups all remain primarily national-state responsibilities—as even most apostles of devolution or "subsidiarity" accept, if grudgingly.[30]

This portrait of state and civil society as mutually reinforcing has limits, to be sure. Stressing a national foundation for citizens' civic ideals can threaten to erase legitimate lines between private and public, or state and society. Political scientist Xu Wang (1999, 245) notes that while "the state helps create, organize, and fund pluralist civil associations, it is also likely to coopt, preempt, subordinate, and control them." Such corrosive effects also work in the reverse direction; as the "capture" literature noted above testifies, state authority can suffer from overly cozy connections between officials and private interests or social networks. Moreover, the factional tendencies of local groups are not necessarily diminished, much less eliminated, when an association operates at a national level.

To acknowledge these concerns, and that the balance between local and federal power is constantly under negotiation, is to highlight the difficulties of promoting state support for such aims as enhancing citizens' sense of connectedness to the whole. Given the degree of alarm about fragmentation and separatism in most present-day states, however, and considering past Americans' practice of promoting both policy making and a stronger sense of civic identity via a government/civil so-

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ciety partnership, it seems wise to revisit the prevailing conception of state and civil society as insuperably separate spheres.

State authority may indeed be eroding in the face of powerful global pressures and cross-currents; time will tell. But with respect to the ostensibly overwhelming force of private interest groups, at least in some advanced democracies, closer inspection suggests that state officials' ability to act decisively and with a substantial degree of discretion is sometimes *abetted* by the agents of those groups, rather than being inevitably diminished. Scholarly trends prefigure a widening conception of the state as crippled in the face of overwhelming external and internal forces. But in response, one can faintly imagine a return, a few years hence, to the theme of the American Political Science Association's annual meeting of 1981, when the state-autonomy wave began to crest: "Restoring the State to Political Science."

NOTES

1. E.g., Nordlinger 1981; Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985. In one summary of the state-autonomy view, "the state was conceived as unitary, above society, and as legitimately penetrative of the entire territory and population under its jurisdiction." Almond 1988, 860.
2. Mathews, forthcoming. Other descriptors are from, respectively, Jackson 2001, esp. 70–72; Migdal 1997, 223n6; Goldstone 1991; and Migdal 1997. See also Benhabib 2001 and Franck 1996.
3. Notable political-science entries in this genre include West 2000; West and Loomis 1999; and Navarro 1984 (subtitle: "How Special Interests and Ideologues Are Stealing America"). More balanced views that still accord a "disturbing" degree of influence to interest groups include Browne 1998, esp. 55–61 (quote at 55); McFarland 1993; Hall and Wayman 1990; and Schlozman and Tierney 1986.
4. Though most scholarly and journalistic accounts deploring the dominance of "special interests" focus on corporate and other for-profit groups, recent work persuasively demonstrates that some citizen (or "public-interest") lobbies, in areas ranging from environmental to consumer rights, have enjoyed considerable influence over policy decisions since the 1960s (see esp. Berry 1999). Thus, in this essay, both citizen and corporate lobbying groups are together referred to as "private," in distinction to the "public" sphere of state authority.
5. "Demosclerosis" is described at length in Rauch 1994; other critiques are cited at n3 above.
6. For a succinct statement of principal/agent theory as applied to clients and lobbyists, see Heinz et al. 1993, 373–74. Salisbury (1990, 224) describes the

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"classic model of lobbying" in similar terms: "A group sends its representative to Washington to press its case for or against some policy option, or it hires one of the many would-be agents already located in the nation's capital. . . . The presumption in this model is that the group knows what its policy interest is."

7. See esp. Becker 1983, and the overview in Van Winden 1999, 7–9. "Bribe" and "auction" are also favored terms for the lobbyist/public-official exchange in much economic scholarship; see Boylan 2000.
8. See, e.g., Heinz et al. 1993, 77 and *passim.*; this treatment is explored in detail below.
9. Note also that some lobbyists enjoy more discretion than others, and that those with greater freedom to pursue their professional interests often also wield more policy influence. It is *not* the case, based on my observations, that differences in the degree of lobbyists' autonomy are based primarily on organizational attributes: lobbyists working for a single firm are no less likely, on average, to depart from their clients' apparent preferences than are independent "hired guns" or those in trade associations. Rather, variations in autonomy arise from features intrinsic to the lobbyists themselves, such as policy expertise, reputation, lobbying style, and personal charisma, and also from the perceived power of the firm or client(s) they represent.
10. For a rare defense of participant observation as a legitimate tool in political-science research, see Fenno 1992.
11. A detailed accounting of my participant-observation method appears in Kersh forthcoming. For what I hope are obvious reasons, these lobbyists are not identified in this study; they are referred to by number ("Lobbyist Number 1," etc.).
12. Horsky 1952, 10–11. Cf. Dexter 1969, 144–45 (portraying the interest-group actor as "the man in the middle").
13. Heinz et al. 1993, quotes at 61 (my emphasis), 67, 188. See generally ibid., 59–79, 184–89, 373–74.
14. I investigated relations between lobbyists and their clients in two main ways: by observing numerous encounters between the two, most of which occur via telephone or e-mail; and by privately interviewing clients at length about their expectations of the firm's (or trade association's, etc.) Washington representatives. I attempted to ascertain in these interviews the extent of clients' substantive knowledge about the relevant policies at issue during the period I studied, including their organization's specific positions; and about what "their" lobbyists actually did on a daily basis to advance the firm's views.
15. Heinz et al. 1993, 189. Compare Salisbury 1990, 225, who notes that it is often unclear what the "true interests" of a group or firm are.
16. Results reflect over 100 hours of client/lobbyist observations, including face-to-face discussions and my listening in on speaker-phone. As in other elements of my research, I coded all lobbyist actions in 5-minute increments: this excludes brief meetings or telephone calls (unless several occurred in close proximity, totaling at least 5 minutes). Each increment was sorted into one of six categories: *receive directions* (client instructing lobbyist to pursue a

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course of action); *discuss issues/strategic planning* (substantive exchange, with both client and lobbyist expressing ideas and opinions); *explain issues* (discussion in which lobbyist did virtually all the talking, educating/instructing client—and often creating preferences and interests along the way); *solicit business* (seeking new clients or, more often, persuading existing clients to pay attention to a hitherto overlooked issue, with help from the lobbyist); *prepare client* (prior to a client's testimony, or his/her meeting with public officials in Washington, lobbyists typically brief the client at some length—on the phone and, the afternoon/evening before, in person); *broker meetings* (lobbyist arranges/attends meetings between client and public official, or client's testimony before Congress).

17. My coding erred well on the side of including anything resembling a directive. One representative example: Lobbyist #8 reports to a vice-president at his company's home offices. After a long discussion between the two about a series of negative media reports concerning an issue important to the firm—which I coded primarily as "discussing issues/strategy" and partly as "explaining issue"—the vice-president said "I'll sign off on that. We're leaving this [planned meetings with Congressional staffers to blunt the damage] in your hands; I figure once you line the rest of them up [collaborate with friendly lobbyists] we'll have no trouble getting our message across. Go get 'em up there [on Capitol Hill]!" He went on thus for long enough that I counted this as a "direction," due to the "I'll sign off" statement; as with most such instances, however, the strategy was developed by the lobbyist.
18. An early entrant is Bauer, Pool, and Dexter 1963.
19. The original study of members of Congress and "credit-claiming" is Mayhew 1974.
20. On legislators, see Fenno 1973; on the Supreme Court, see Schauer 2000.
21. See the references in note 3 above.
22. Fenno 1973 lists this alongside winning reelection and achieving leadership status within Congress as a primary goal for some legislators.
23. Thanks to Gary McKissick for this formulation.
24. E.g., the influential introduction to Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985.
25. A good summary of the burgeoning civil-society literature is Hefner 1998; the most prominent recent entry is Putnam 2000. See also Kaufman 1999 and Berman 1997.
26. On "classic pluralist" scholars' tendency to "reject the very notion of state sovereignty, and characteriz[e] the state as one association among many," see Almond 1988 (854). An early hint of the resumption of pluralist views is Salisbury 2000.
27. For a sustained discussion of the lobbyist/legislator relationship as one of mutual exchanges, see Kersh, forthcoming.
28. See also Diamond 1994, and Hefner 1998, 20.
29. Kersh 2001 provides historical details. A good recent summary of the contrary view, that the U.S. state was enfeebled to the point of irrelevance until the early twentieth century, is in Argersinger 2001, 118–20.

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30. In one recent formulation, "Even strict states' rights advocates say Washington's recent tendency to impose uniform laws for complex industries such as banking and telecommunications makes some sense." Grunwald 1999, 29.

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Steven M. Sheffrin

REGULATION, POLITICS, AND INTEREST GROUPS: WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM AN HISTORICAL APPROACH?

ABSTRACT: *In* The Regulated Economy: A Historical Approach to Political Economy, *Claudia Goldin and Gary D. Libecap use case studies to defend and expand upon the notion that elements of civil society—"special interests"—manage to "capture" government regulators and make the state serve their selfish ends. The evidence of the case studies themselves, however, and the occurrence of such anomalies as the deregulatory movement, suggest that government actors often enjoy considerable autonomy in regulating civil society, and that readily manipulable currents in public opinion are also important.*

The theory of regulation began with the "public-interest" view, according to which economic regulations are adopted in the interest of consumers, so as to promote the general welfare. For example, early analysis of the regulation of U.S. railroads focused on the role of the Interstate Commerce Commission in reducing price discrimination and monopoly power. According to the public-interest theory, there will be a demand for regulation when the free market subjects consumers to monopoly power or other market inefficiencies. "The state," it might be said, acted as an agent for the good of "civil society."

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This view of regulation was challenged by both historians and economists. In the case of railroads, Gabriel Kolko (1965) argued that historically, regulations were designed to serve the interests of the railroads themselves. This claim was congruent with the modern interest-group theory of regulation, developed by George Stigler (1971) and Gary Becker (1983). Their work emphasizes the ability of organized "special interests" within civil society to influence state policy to their own advantage.

The interest-group theory explores the circumstances under which groups are more likely to organize and, in turn, influence public policy to serve their own narrow ends. Unlike the public-interest view, the interest-group theory does not assume that regulatory outcomes will benefit consumers. Indeed, since consumer interests are likely to be diffuse and not easily organized, the natural tendency should be for regulation to affect consumer interests adversely. However, Becker allows that market failures create opportunities, at least in theory, for positive-sum regulations.

In *The Regulated Economy: A Historical Approach to Political Economy* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), Claudia Goldin and Gary D. Libecap introduce eight historical essays on the development of modern American regulatory structures, focusing on the role of interest groups and politics in the historical genesis of the regulation of railroads, natural gas, banking, immigration, agriculture, and labor, from the nineteenth century through the Great Depression. The essays use a variety of approaches, from statistical analyses of legislative and electoral voting to traditional historical narratives, to put flesh on the Stigler-Becker framework, marshalling a wide range of evidence to highlight the role of the interest groups in the initiation, design, and implementation of economic regulation.

However, in many cases the links between economic interests and regulatory outcomes is indirect at best, undercutting the persuasiveness of the Stigler-Becker framework. It is often quite difficult to provide compelling evidence linking economic interests to specific legislative votes and policy outcomes. Moreover, the histories of regulation in this volume make it clear that an autonomous "state"—i.e., legislators, regulators, and judges acting on their own, not at the behest of any element of civil society—has played an important role in the timing and evolution of regulation in the United States.

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The Tenuous Link between Special Interests and State Actions

In popular American discussion, economic regulation is often portrayed as if it were solely the province of the federal government. But by looking at state-level regulation, several of the book's essays show that politics often interferes with the pursuit of economic self-interest posited by the interest-group theory.

In "The Origins of State Railroad Regulation: The Illinois Constitution of 1870," Mark Kanazawa and Roger Noll analyze efforts to regulate railroads in Illinois—efforts that preceded by 20 years the passage of the Interstate Commerce Act, and that were opposed by the railroads. Analyzing votes on a referendum and at a constitutional convention, Kanazawa and Noll show that voters' ballots did not always track their economic interests, as public-choice theorists assume. Often they voted "altruistically." (Kanazawa and Noll also show that producer groups do not necessarily have monolithic interests.)

Werner Troesken's essay, "The Institutional Antecedents of State Utility Regulation: The Chicago Gas Industry, 1860 to 1913," is, at first glance, compatible with the interest-group theory. Troesken shows that vigorous competition in the market for natural gas was thwarted by the Gas Acts of 1897, which, at the behest of established gas companies, had the effect of greatly restricting entry and eventually leading to monopoly provision. But then the story takes a turn that might surprise at least a naïve proponent of the "capture theory" of regulation. Fearing municipal regulation of their monopoly, gas producers pushed for state regulation by means of a state public utility commission. Troesken maintains that gas producers feared that closer monitoring by municipal governments would lead to lower gas prices than would regulation through a more distant state regulatory body, illustrating an old rule of politics: if you are losing in one forum, find a different one. The larger lesson of this tale is that regulation does not always serve the interests of the regulated. In the case of Chicago, the original, industry-serving regulations led to a political reaction that would have undermined the gas monopoly's interests. The state regulation then pursued by the industry was a lesser evil, in the industry's view, than municipal regulation would have been—but it was an evil nevertheless, not an expression of its interests per se.

At bottom, the problem with the interest-group theory—ironically, since it was developed by economists—is that it fails to provide micro-

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foundations for the behavior it postulates. In the economy, self-interest is manifested in economizing *behavior* by producers and consumers. Selfish motives aren't enough: there must be mechanisms, such as competition over price and quality, that allow these motives to affect outcomes. But even if we make the heroic assumption that the main motive of all political actors is selfish, we still need to know precisely how they manage to translate their wishes into government actions, such as favorable legislation or the promulgation of specific regulations. In short, just how is "regulatory capture" supposed to work?

Although it is not their primary intent, several essays in this book suggest that often, it doesn't work. In many instances it seems that the links between interest groups and legislation are quite loose, pointing to a role for autonomous political factors in determining the pace and design of regulation, un-"captured" by civil-society interest groups.

In "The Political Economy of Immigration Restriction in the United States, 1890 to 1921," Claudia Golden analyzes what caused America to shift to a more restrictive immigration policy. Goldin demonstrates that relatively high rates of immigration in a given congressional district had two distinct effects. While it lowered the wages of the native born, it also eventually created a pro-immigrant voting bloc. Goldin estimates that once a district was more than 30 percent foreign born, its congressional representative would support continued open immigration. But while the need to obtain votes makes sense as a microfoundation for self-interested legislative behavior, it fails to enable Goldin to predict the timing or nature of immigration restrictions. Goldin argues that a "regime change was inevitable" (256). But the precise timing of this shift over a 20-year period, and the changing political attitudes of the South towards restrictive immigration, are not easily accounted for by her standard model of the influence of voters' economic interests.

On the other side of the interaction between interests and legislators, "Congress and Railroad Regulation: 1874 to 1887," by Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, criticizes the naïve assumption that a legislator's roll-call vote reflects her electoral interests alone. The authors show that many factors, including personal conviction, influence legislators and that, in close votes, partisan considerations will often dominate. Thus, Poole and Rosenthal warn, it is risky to make strong inferences from single votes—as many of the papers in this volume do. The link between interests and votes is not that straightforward.

Additional evidence for the autonomous role of political factors and political complexities in regulation is evident in "Political Bargaining and

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Cartelization in the New Deal: Orange Marketing Orders," by Elizabeth Hoffman and Gary Libecap. In 1933, to raise the income of farm producers, the U.S. government tried to create agricultural cartels. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) was confident that this strategy would be effective, but it did not prove possible to work out stable cartel arrangements. In the market for oranges, heterogeneous interests prevented success. Hoffman and Libecap emphasize that in understanding regulatory regimes, we must go beyond formal legislation and study the implementation process involving agencies and constituents. Despite the AAA's intention to allow the orange industry to use the regulatory apparatus for its own end, the practical difficulties in parceling out the benefits to market participants made this policy unworkable.

Just as important, if not more so, is the role of political persuasion, propaganda, symbolism, and information. For example, in "The Origins of Federal Deposit Insurance," Charles Calomiris and Eugene Nelson White contend that federal deposit insurance was special-interest legislation for states with volatile economies and prohibitions on branch banking—which, they maintain, diversifies economic risks without incurring the moral-hazard problem of deposit insurance (which protects profligate banks against market retribution). Small banks in agricultural areas were particularly vulnerable to downturns caused by local crop failures. Rather than abandoning their prohibitions on branch banking, however—which would have threatened small local banks—agricultural states lobbied for a federal deposit-insurance program.

Despite the onset of the Great Depression, however, the Roosevelt administration and the bank-regulatory agencies initially opposed federal deposit insurance. What turned the tide? Calomiris and White argue that the "nature of the battle over deposit insurance changed in the 1930s from a battle waged in Congress among special interests to one that engaged the public interest. The banking collapse focused the attention of the public on the otherwise esoteric political issue of banking reform" (146). Such politicians as Representative Henry B. Steagall took advantage of the new public sentiment to successfully lead the campaign for deposit insurance.

The Political Regulation of Capitalism

Taken together, these essays point to some key limitations of the standard Stigler-Becker view of group interests and regulation. A number of

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important factors intervene between group interests and regulatory outcomes.

First, as several of these papers clearly emphasize, the politics of regulation can and does take place in many different venues. In the United States, the variety of regulatory arenas includes Congress, regulatory bureaucracies, municipal and state governments, and self-regulating business groups. Strategic actors understand this complex landscape and attempt to move decision making to the arenas that are more advantageous to them.

As a rule, narrowly defined economic interests are more effective in legislative settings and smoke-filled rooms than on the public stage, where appeals—however misleading—to the common good are at a premium. As Calomiris and White emphasize, part of Steagall's strategy was to make the nationwide banking collapse a focal issue so as to galvanize public support. Congressional hearings, newspaper editorials, speeches, and other means of swaying public opinion can—at the risk of stating the obvious—be more important than the lineup of interest groups. Nor are interest groups and public opinion necessarily at odds. Public opinion can be swayed when the playing field is widened and new participants enter the debate.

Second, in democracies regulatory battles never really end. Initial legislation is followed either by subsequent legislation or debates over regulatory implementation. As the Hoffman-Libecap and Calomiris-White papers show, regulatory structures and legislation can evolve over long periods of time. As the years pass, the nature of the participants will often vary, giving the losing side a chance to rebound and making it difficult for groups that initially prevail to preserve their advantages.

As the essays in this book make clear, interest groups are important but not definitive in determining the timing and precise substance of regulation. It is simply not the case that narrowly defined economic interests determine outcomes, as naïve practitioners of the Stigler-Becker approach often contend. Interest groups may help frame the debate, but there is plenty of room for autonomous political factors to intervene.

Consider as an example the current debate on Social Security reform. In this debate, interest groups include the current elderly (and near elderly), future workers, Wall Street firms, and the existing Social Security bureaucracy. The debate over the next decade will take place in multiple forums and will involve a variety of tactics. There will be some attempts to narrow the issue, for example, by focusing on the

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question of where the government should invest the trust fund or, alternatively, on whether workers should be given an opportunity to make their own decisions about the allocation of retirement funds. And there will be attempts to broaden the issue: for example, by linking Social Security with reform of Medicare. There will also be continuing efforts to change the preferences and attitudes of voters. At the moment, we can recognize the various interests at play, but predicting the precise outcomes is impossible. When the dust settles, we may be able to identify the most successful strategies, but this is clearly in the realm of hindsight, not of predictive political science or economics.

Beyond Case Studies

A reader of the detailed essays in this book would learn quite a bit about the historical political economy of regulation, but would not necessarily be able to link any of these individual regulatory episodes together. Although the term "Progressive era" is mentioned in the essays, it apparently was not significant enough to make it into the index of the book. Is there something beyond an extended Stigler-Becker regulatory approach that ties different episodes of regulation together?

The implicit answer in this book is "no." The volume's case studies span the 60 years prior to the Great Depression and, as we have seen, cover many seemingly unrelated issues. The editors attempt to tie these essays together with a self-conscious effort to broaden the Stigler-Becker approach to the relationship of interest groups to regulation. Nonetheless, the message from this book is to treat each case as a separate instance of this relationship.

Nonetheless, there are hints within the book that broader forces are at work. Wallis, Sylla, and Legler argue that the tax and regulatory structures in banking varied over time and were endogenous to the several states. A number of the authors discuss how the popular referendum, a political tool advocated by Progressive reformers, can shape regulatory outcomes quite differently than would standard statehouse or Congressional politics. And broader national trends were clearly at work in the movements toward stricter immigration laws and toward the adoption of deposit insurance.

To determine if we need to move beyond an analysis of specific case studies to understand the dynamics of regulation, it may be useful to think about the recent movement toward deregulation around the

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world. Does deregulation fit into even an extended Stigler-Becker framework, or do we need to look for broader, more comprehensive factors?

Deregulation and State Autonomy

Since the 1970s, there has been a systematic movement towards deregulation. In the United States, we have witnessed deregulation efforts in trucking, airlines, telephone service, banking and financial services, cable television and, more recently, in gas and electric power. In Great Britain, deregulation has been accompanied by privatization in electricity, telephones, and most recently railroads. In our everyday understanding of deregulation, we think of these efforts collectively as a trend in economic management and as part of an overall political movement. Americans trace these efforts back to Presidents Carter and Reagan, Britons to Margaret Thatcher.

Clearly, deregulation was influenced by the work and writings of economists who championed market competition. Some of the more persuasive voices in these debates were those of economists and lawyers affiliated with the University of Chicago. Indeed, it was George Stigler himself, along with the likes of Richard Posner and Sam Peltzman, who highlighted the adverse consequences of existing regulatory structures. Working from the Stigler-Becker interest-group theory of regulation, it was no surprise to these scholars that regulations did not serve the "public interest" but instead were designed to satisfy the interests of the most salient special interests. In the view of many observers, the Chicago school was quite successful in persuading powerful bureaucrats and legislators that deregulation would serve—the public interest. Thus, the same economists who portrayed the state as being dominated by special interests were able to prompt deregulatory efforts that, by their very success, would seem to show that the state is, in many cases, autonomous from those interests—if, for example, government officials become persuaded that those interests are not congruent with the public good.

The ability to provide a plausible account of the trend towards deregulation is an important challenge for the Stigler-Becker analysis of regulation. Let me sketch a general outline of how defenders of that analysis might proceed. They would start from a "regulatory equilibrium" in which existing regulations were consistent with the current

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configuration and power of interest groups. They would then posit a technological disturbance or other exogenous factor to disturb this equilibrium. Given the new disequilibrium, interest groups would find the status quo unsatisfactory and maneuver for changes in the existing structure—with the result, sometimes, being deregulation.

On the surface, such an argument confronts a number of immediate problems. First, casual evidence suggests that it was state actors, not interest groups, that were instrumental in several major deregulation efforts. Members of the Civil Aeronautics Board and the economist Alfred Kahn were the prime movers behind airline deregulation, while Harold Green, the judge in the AT&T antitrust case, helped initiate the move towards deregulation in the telephone industry. Moreover, in many cases it is doubtful that the protagonists of deregulation had a clear idea of how the market would evolve and thus whose interests their reforms would serve. For example, did the proponents of airline deregulation envision the onset of dramatic price discrimination between business travelers and vacation travelers, or the hub and spoke system that replaced the prior system?

Third, the ubiquitous nature of deregulation tells against a single exogenous shock changing a regulatory equilibrium. What single disturbance could affect airlines, telephones, trucking, and natural gas?

Third, the primary beneficiary of regulation may have been—just as the Stiger-Becker reformers claimed, in their role as advocates of how things *should* be (rather than as analysts of how they *are*)—the most unorganized group of all: consumers. In his summary of deregulation efforts, Clifford Winston (1998) suggests that this was indeed the case, due to lower prices, increased competition, and more rapid technological innovation. The other primary beneficiaries were often new firms, such as Southwest Airlines, that did not exist before deregulation. How do such firms, along with unorganized consumers, fit into a Stigler-Becker interest-group-dominated world?

Finally, in many episodes of deregulation, it was difficult to envision the ultimate benefits, let alone the beneficiaries. Railroad deregulation in Great Britain is a case in point, as economists were unsure whether it is possible to maintain a unified rail network while privatizing many of its components. In the United States, airline deregulation opened up the possibility of more frequent travel for both business and recreational purposes in high-density corridors, but sharply reduced service in rural areas. Moreover, the airlines' differential pricing policies for seats on the same flight—what the airlines term "yield management"—have allowed

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the airlines to saddle business travelers with relatively high fares at the same time as they are forced to travel under increasingly congested conditions.

One proponent of the Stigler-Becker theory has taken seriously the challenge of explaining deregulation. Sam Peltzman (1989) argued that technological changes reduced the economic rents that were available in regulated industries, thereby lowering the incentives for continued regulation. Peltzman attempted to apply this argument to specific episodes of deregulation. Peltzman's energetic efforts, however, left many of his colleagues "disappointed that a 'meta-theory' has not emerged which can adequately explain when, and in what sectors, regulation is put in place and when and where it is dismantled" (58).

By raising challenges to a Stigler-Becker account of deregulation, I do not wish to preclude its applicability. It may be true that in some cases, the progressive inefficiencies of existing regulations led to profound dissatisfaction on the part of powerful interests. A case in point may be electric utility deregulation in California. Driven by a desire to pursue alternative energy sources, regulators mandated that utilities purchase very expensive alternative power from a variety of politically fashionable sources, such as windmills and geothermal plants. They also made arrangements with very large utilities that allowed them to shift some of the risks of their nuclear plants to shareholders, but at the expense of higher costs to ratepayers. Business interests began to view the resulting high cost of electric power as a serious impediment to economic development. The California Manufacturing Association and other business interests began to champion (incomplete) deregulation and began working with the legislature to change the existing structure. On the other hand, the chaos that developed in the electricity market in California in 2000 and 2001 is also testimony to the unintended consequences of deregulation. It appears now that large businesses in California will pay much more for electricity in the deregulated world than they ever would under old-style regulation.

Perhaps there are similar episodes of progressive and cumulative inefficiencies in other industries that will eventually motivate well-organized interests to push for deregulation. Nonetheless, until a case is made that an extended Stigler-Becker approach can account for deregulation, we are entitled to conclude that deregulation must be viewed as a movement, not simply as a series of isolated episodes—and a movement whose recommendations were motivated and implemented by government actors who were convinced of the validity of certain ideas,

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not by interests that (somehow) "captured" the government in pursuit of their narrow ends.

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Anthony Woodlief

WHAT ECONOMISTS SAY (AND DON'T SAY) ABOUT POLITICS

ABSTRACT: *Sam Peltzman has brought discipline and common sense to economic analyses of voting and representation. Yet his approach suffers, like that of other economists, from disciplinary provincialism and a singular devotion to econometrics as a research methodology. Political science offers alternative models and research methods that can enliven and deepen the political analyses of Peltzman and other economists.*

In *Political Participation and Government Regulation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), a collection of ten papers authored over 17 years, Sam Peltzman displays the power of economic inquiry at its best, sprinkled occasionally with inadvertent disclosures of its profound weaknesses. Peltzman, who followed George Stigler in pioneering the fields of regulation and modern political economy, offers formal theory and empirical evidence that seems to contradict both the belief that voters are largely ignorant and the simple "capture theory" of economic regulation. His research suggests that voters not only are well informed about the macroeconomy, but are able to discern the extent of legislators' responsibility, and are willing to reward or punish them based on that knowledge. Peltzman has also modified the growing economic theory of regulation (Becker 1983; Jordan 1972; Stigler 1971; Stigler and Friedland 1962) by illuminating the likely tendency of regulators to spread benefits among both producers and consumers. Peltzman has

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also been vigilant in focusing attention on weaknesses in the tradition he helped begin, including phenomena that his own research cannot satisfactorily explain.

In the realm of voter rationality and political representation, Peltzman stepped into a debate among economists that it would not be unfair to characterize as both methodologically flawed and inexcusably parochial. I will elaborate on the latter charge below. Methodologically, as Peltzman noted in "Economic Conditions and Gubernatorial Elections" (1987, ch. 3), for example, early research claiming that voters take only very recent economic conditions into account when evaluating U.S. presidents either suffered from too small a sample size, or included data from early years when government control over the macroeconomy was negligible (70–71). Research into political representation of constituents was worse; most economists proceeded as if all residents of a congressional district support their representative, so they used district-wide averages of income, education, and other demographic variables to represent constituent interests in their econometric models, failing to distinguish between a legislator's supporters and opponents. Recognizing the absurdity of this approach, Peltzman did research showing that constituents' economic interests were significantly less influential on congressional votes than had been thought.

The effort to introduce political realism into economic analyses of political relationships is characteristic of Peltzman's approach. He writes in the introduction:

> My interest in the working of the political process arose out of my earlier work on regulation. This had convinced me that the economic analysis of any government activity, whether it be regulation or something else, like the size of a budget, could not be separated from analysis of politics. So I felt the need to delve more deeply into how the primary participants in the political process—the voters and their representatives—made their decisions. (xv.)

In pursuit of political realism, Peltzman is just as reliant as his brethren on formal models and econometric analysis of data, but the papers in this volume evidence a theoretical (and hence methodological) precision that, he rightly suggests, distinguishes his work from predecessors who applied economic models to politics. A 1984 paper reprinted here, for example, entered a debate (largely among economists) about whether legislators are motivated more by constituent eco-

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nomic interests or by their own ideologies (i.e., whether they are "shirking" their responsibilities as representatives).[1] The conclusion reached by most, after econometric comparisons of variables taken to represent both influences, was that ideology matters more (Kalt 1981; Kalt and Zupan 1984; Kau and Rubin 1979; Mitchell 1979; Nelson and Silberman 1987).[2] Peltzman injected realism and common sense into this debate by developing a formal model of constituent representation that distinguished between the characteristics of average voters, supporters, and campaign contributors in a congressional district, and assessed the effects of each on a legislator's roll-call votes. Whereas earlier work had attributed a sizable impact on congressional voting to the ideology of individual members of Congress, Peltzman found that legislator ideology all but disappeared as a determinant of votes in every arena except domestic social policy, drowned out by variables purported to represent constituent economic interests.[3]

One criticism of this approach is that it uses at best a very crude measure of *how much* a given bill serves the interests of constituents. Imagine that we could rate bills on a 200-point scale in terms of how much each serves constituent interests, with -100 reflecting the greatest harm to constituent interests, and 100 reflecting the greatest benefit. Treating roll-call votes as dichotomous (i.e., either benefiting or not benefiting supporters) doesn't help us discern the relative importance of various votes. If the Congress routinely turns out bills that deserve a ranking of "1," for example, legislators will still be evaluated as serving the economic interests of their constituents so long as, when voting on a "1" bill, they vote "Yes." If a legislator votes for three "1's" and a "-100," he is coded no differently than the legislator who votes for three "100's" and a "-1." In other words, assessing whether a legislator's roll-call votes are congruent with the economic interests of his supporters may leave one vulnerable to mistaking crumbs for a full meal (on this point see also Stigler 1972).

A deeper investigation of the extent to which legislators serve constituent interests would probably involve some distinctly "non-economics" methods, but not necessarily. One could assess legislative proposals according to their advantage to constituents, and then correlate this rating with their observed likelihood of passage. Even this would depend on legislators introducing bills in the first place, but it would move one closer to a meaningful assessment of constituent service through legislation.

If one were willing to abandon econometric analysis for a moment,

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one could interview and observe legislators, their staff members, interest-group leaders, presidential aides, journalists, and other informed political elites in order to assess the extent to which legislators weigh the interests of their constituents when making decisions. This is what political scientists were doing, in fact, at least five years before the debate began among economists. While Peltzman rightly corrected economists who treated every district inhabitant as a constituent, his work was inaccurate as well; he identified only what appeared to be stable groups of supporters, based on economic demographics. The political scientist Morris Fiorina (1974) observed, on the other hand, that the collection of constituents to which a legislator must pay attention shifts from policy to policy. Salience varies across issues and constituent groups, meaning that legislators have the problem and opportunity of trying to please multiple, shifting constituencies (Fenno 1978; Kingdon 1977; Orfield 1975; Price 1978).

This observation by no means refutes Peltzman's finding that U.S. congressmen serve the economic interests of their constituents. But while Peltzman could say no more than that it appears that legislators vote according to the economic interests of a bloc of constituents, political scientists have painted a much clearer picture of precisely how legislators incorporate the conflicting interests of various constituent groups into their decisions, which include much more than roll-call votes. Their work illuminates a level of constituent-service skill among legislators that no econometric analysis like Peltzman's could ever reveal. The fact that this debate could go on among economists for ten years with virtually no reference to the work of people knowledgeable about the daily decision making of legislators reveals both disciplinary self-absorption and an excessive reliance on a single research methodology. These two tendencies have long threatened to make economics less a field of social inquiry than a coven of technical esoterica.

While the analysis in Peltzman's 1984 paper was as parochial as the economics literature in which it was embedded, his model of legislative representation proved more valuable in a second paper, "An Economic Interpretation of the History of Congressional Voting in the Twentieth Century" (1985) (ch. 2). In it he sought to explain changes in congressional voting patterns that appeared to be driven simply by regional ideology. He found that regional ideology indeed matters, but that while it was once constrained, it later became increasingly liberated by regional economic conditions. Peltzman concluded that while Southerners were more ideologically opposed to redistribution, they were

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also poorer than most Americans. According to Peltzman, this dampened the effect of ideology on congressional voting, as liberal Northerners faced a high price in voting for redistribution, while conservative Southerners faced a high opportunity cost for indulging their inclination to vote against it.[4] As the vast income gap between North and South at the end of the Civil War slowly declined, however, Northern voters (from whom relatively less was therefore taken for redistribution to the South) found that the price of electing the liberals they preferred also declined, while the price for Southerners (who were decreasingly recipients of redistribution) increased. Thus, while 100 years ago the liberal tendency of Northerners and the conservative tendency of Southerners were attenuated by their countervailing economic interests, changes in income increasingly reinforced their ideological differences, leading Peltzman to speculate that "regional political differences will *grow* in the future even as the economic element of these differences diminishes" (66, emph. original). Some evidence appears to favor this prediction: there are noticeable differences between white Northerners and Southerners on economic and social matters, while the percentage of Southern whites registered as Democrats has declined since the 1950s (National Election Studies 1995-98).[5] The latter datum has stabilized since Peltzman made his prediction, but so has the per-capita personal-income gap between Southern and New England states (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000).

Beyond the immediate question of Peltzman's prediction is his assumption, reflected here and in other papers, that ideology and perceived economic interest can be separated. I take this up below.

The Economics of Voter Rationality

Peltzman's recent volume contains three papers that address the question of voter rationality: namely, whether citizens properly reward or punish elected officials. "Properly" here means that they act as if they are aware of social conditions, legislators' actions, and the connections between them, and reward or punish legislators accordingly. (The phrase "as if," I will argue, is a powerful tool both for theorizing and for misunderstanding.) For economists, including Peltzman, the subject of this question is quickly narrowed from citizen to voter, and from all preferences to selfish economic preferences: does each voter accurately

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reward or punish elected officials for economic outcomes that benefit or harm him?

Peltzman overcame the small-sample problems of earlier works, in one case (1987) by examining data from large U.S. gubernatorial elections, and in others by examining gubernatorial and senatorial returns along with each party's share of votes in presidential races. He also distinguished between incumbents and challengers as a means of controlling for the political advantages held by the former. Unlike previous scholars, he found that voters seemed surprisingly knowledgeable, that they had longer memories than had been thought, and that they were capable of distinguishing between local and national policy effects, between policy-induced and exogenous income changes, and between expected and unexpected inflation. He noted that in the years 1964, 1976, and 1980, income and inflation appear especially significant as predictors of marginal voter behavior compared to other years, many of which reveal little correlation between economic variables and voting. In a 1992 paper Peltzman also determined that since 1950, U.S. voters had penalized federal and state spending growth, and that the type of spending (e.g., welfare versus highways) had affected the extent of electoral punishment.

Readers familiar with the topic of voter rationality will recognize the tangle of problems awaiting anyone attempting to define "rational," let alone trying to determine whether voters behave rationally. It is a credit to Peltzman's insight that he avoided many of these problems, apparently by reason alone, since they have largely been discussed in political science works that he does not cite. It is easiest to understand the traps awaiting research like Peltzman's by noting two essential assumptions about voter preferences underlying his model of voter behavior: that voters have the knowledge to act on their interests, and that voting is determined largely by economic self-interest. To these can be added the assumption that legislators seek to maximize their share of the electoral vote.

A large body of research undermines these assumptions, and before going forward, it is helpful to consider why this matters. The value of any empirically testable model as an explanatory tool[6] depends both on its conformity to observed outcomes and—if plausible competing hypotheses (i.e., hypotheses that predict a significant portion of observed outcomes) exist—on the tenability of its assumptions compared to those incorporated in the alternative hypotheses. If two hypotheses equally predict some set of outcomes, but the first is based on demon-

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strably untrue assumptions while the assumptions of the second are demonstrably true, it is logical to favor the second as the most correct explanation of reality on offer. As we shall see, there are plausible hypotheses that can explain voting and election outcomes just as well as Peltzman's research, yet they rest on very different assumptions about political actors' motivations and capabilities. Therefore it is helpful to consider the viability of Peltzman's assumptions before comparing them to the assumptions underlying alternative models of voter and legislative behavior.

There is considerable evidence that voters are largely ignorant of even basic information about political and economic conditions, let alone their legislative actions, contrary to Peltzman's first assumption. When only a minority of American citizens can name their congressman, and fewer than 40 percent can name both of their senators, the belief that voters are capable of assessing individual legislators' contributions to income gains and unexpected inflation appears farfetched (Erikson, Luttbeg, and Tedin 1988). One can also question whether voters have coherent belief systems (Converse 1964) that allow them to integrate the information they do have into a set of preferences (i.e., the relative value of inflation, job growth, crime, etc.) that can rationally and consistently inform their voting.

Peltzman's second assumption is that voters are rational, self-interested maximizers of personal resources who vote for the candidates they think likeliest to increase their economic well-being. In his 1985 paper Peltzman went so far as to write that "constituents from high-income, manufacturing-intensive, and urban areas have *generally* been asking for opposition by their congressmen to expansion of the federal budget for at least the last sixty years" (44, emph. original). He based the claim that they are *asking* for spending restraint not on survey evidence or interviews with congressional staff, but on a statistical analysis suggesting that voters with these characteristics are better off economically if they retain their tax dollars rather than seeing them go to federal spending.

For economists, it is a small step to assume that voter preferences can be deduced from a reading of narrow economic interests. Yet many political scientists have offered models, econometric analysis, and qualitative research that brings this assumption into question. To be sure, political scientists agree that economic conditions affect voter behavior. But their inquiries have been, in fact, much richer than the description provided by Peltzman in this book, where he sets it up primarily as a ques-

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tion about which macroeconomic variables matter and how long voter memories are. Political scientists have also studied, for example, the extent to which voters evaluate candidates based on their perceptions of national economic conditions ("sociotropic" voting—see Kinder and Kiewet 1979 and 1981; Markus 1987 and 1992; Meehl 1977) rather than their individual economic condition. They have found that other things matter as well. Voters have preferences for public goods (Hawthorne and Jackson 1987), for example, which are not entirely predictable by their income, and which affect legislative behavior (Jackson and King 1989). And at a root level, their ideologies and economic interests are so intertwined that attempting to isolate one from the other moves the theorist away from a realistic model of political decision making (Kingdon 1989) and introduces the likelihood of deeply flawed conclusions (Jackson and Kingdon 1990).

What is more, evidence from voter surveys suggests that beyond supporting legislators solely because of their policies, constituents may support them at least in part because legislators are skilled at manipulating symbols (Sears, et al. 1979 and 1980), or because they share the same party identification. In a rich treatment of voter behavior, Angus Campbell, et al. (1960, 67–76) demonstrated that political party identification among voters in the United States

> is a psychological identification . . . [that] raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation. The stronger the party bond, the more exaggerated the process of selection and perceptual distortion will be.

Campbell and his colleagues found that voter perceptions of economic conditions certainly matter, but not independently of other factors.

To see how the phenomenon of party identification—well known to political scientists but largely ignored by economists—can create problems when the latter seek to explain voter behavior, consider some of the variables Peltzman uses to represent constituent economic interests in his 1984 and 1985 papers: education levels, urban residence, and the percentage of the population that is black. Families are likely to be similar between one generation and the next on the first two variables, and are all but guaranteed to stay the same on the third. This is relevant because when children inherit their parents' characteristics on these dimensions, they are also likely to inherit party identification. In other words, just as education levels are positively correlated across family

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generations, so is party identification.[7] Thus, when we find that the aforementioned demographic variables in a Congressional district help predict a legislator's votes, a simple regression model will not tell us whether voters are acting on their economic interests as reflected in these variables, or whether they are simply acting on a party identification acquired from their parents. Therefore we can't know, without deeper investigation, if the legislator is representing supporters, or if both legislator and supporters share a common ideology that may or may not promote the supporters' interests.

Beyond the question of whether voters have the knowledge and inclination to act on economic self-interest is the question of whether legislators respond to this self-interest in an effort to maximize votes—the third of Peltzman's assumptions. Political scientists who have interviewed and closely observed legislators have found otherwise. David Mayhew (1974) discovered that congressmen seek to win re-election comfortably, in order to avoid showing weakness to potential competitors, but that they do *not* try to maximize their electoral vote; rather, they engage in "minimax" behavior by trying to avoid costly (from an electoral standpoint) voting decisions while sustaining the coalition that put them in office. Richard Fenno (1973) found that Congressmen have three goals: get re-elected, achieve influence within Congress, and make "good" public policy. The last two goals certainly create complications for the vote-maximization assumption, because they indicate that legislators may make decisions that are suboptimal in terms of potential vote gain, but optimal in pursuit of influence-building or doing "the right thing."

Cognizant of the inherent weaknesses of the first two assumptions, Peltzman wisely tailored his central questions accordingly. In his 1990 and 1992 papers he recognized the potential importance of party identification and focused on the marginal voter who is, "on other grounds, essentially indifferent between the two parties and uses macroeconomic information to choose between them" (81). Attempting to isolate marginal voters both narrowed and strengthened Peltzman's findings, muting criticisms like those leveled above but restricting his findings to at most 20 percent of the electorate.

Retrodiction vs. Political Analysis

Although there are reasons to question the assumptions underlying Peltzman's models, one might argue in defense of any model that it

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should be judged by its predictive (or retrodictive) ability. In other words, "the proof is in the pudding." Milton Friedman articulated the claim that the positive economist develops theories that are to be judged solely on their predictive accuracy, not the supposed realism of their "assumptions" (a term that, he argued, misleads us about the nature of hypotheses). If the economist's predictions hold true, then it is "as if" the hypotheses underlying the model are true. A critique of the model's assumptions, then, is beside the point:

> The relevant question to ask about the "assumptions" of a theory is not whether they are descriptively "realistic," for they never are, but whether they are sufficiently good approximations for the purpose in hand. And this question can be answered only by seeing whether the theory works, which means whether it yields sufficiently accurate predictions. (Friedman 1953, 15.)

By this standard Peltzman is on solid ground, and he is well aware of the problems with assuming a real-world connection between a legislator's ideology and a voter's economic self-interest. For example, he notes (16), regarding the findings in his 1984 paper, that

> these results should not be interpreted to say that [supporter] interest rather than [the legislators'] political kinship really determines [legislative] voting patterns. There is much collinearity between party affiliation and the characteristics of supporters and contributors, perhaps too much for such a conclusion to be confidently drawn.

What matters, he argues, is the ability of the economic model to predict outcomes: does the world function as if the assumptions are in fact true? His econometric results led him to conclude that it does:

> The results do imply that economists unfamiliar with the workings of party loyalties can proceed *as if* such things did not matter and focus instead on who the constituents are and where the campaign funds come from. (Ibid., emph. original.)

This is a reasonable argument in context because the question addressed by Peltzman's 1984 paper is whether constituents' economic interests are being served by legislators' votes—regardless of whether legislators respond to constituents, or whether constituents respond to legislators, or whether constituents vote for other reasons and accidentlly have their economic interests served anyway. In answer to this question,

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his findings were powerful, especially in light of the argument accepted by other economists: that legislators were shirking their duties as representatives.

Neither Peltzman's 1984 paper, however, nor any of his other work discussed above, should be mistaken for the "analysis of politics" that he claims in his introduction to this volume to have undertaken. Political analysis implies an attempt to understand what drives political behavior, and by this measure the work of Peltzman and other economists is unsatisfying. Peltzman found that voters and legislators appear to behave as if certain assumptions fundamental to an economist's view of politics hold true. This is not so much a confirmation of this model of political behavior as a finding, based on an extremely limited research methodology (econometrics alone, without surveys or interviews), that the assumptions haven't been *disconfirmed*.

I claimed earlier that, if one's goal is not simply prediction of behavior but also explanation of its motivations, then competing hypotheses equally capable of explaining observed outcomes should be compared according to the tenability of their assumptions.[8] So far I have criticized Peltzman's assumptions without offering a plausible alternative theory. Economists are often unfairly treated in this manner by other social scientists, who assume that establishing the unrealistic nature of an assumption is equivalent to debunking the research on which it is based. Of course this is untrue: prediction has value, as does a clear model that provides understanding not directly, but by virtue of extreme assumptions that, when weakened, help one understand why actual events diverge from those predicted by the model.

Friedman rightly rebuked noneconomists who content themselves with attacking the unrealistic assumptions of economists without providing "evidence that a hypothesis differing in one or another of these respects from the theory being criticized yields better predictions for as wide a range of phenomena" (1953, 31). Friedman's wording, however, suggests that competing theories would not be judged by many economists as yielding "better predictions for as wide a range of phenomena" unless they were testable econometric models. The problem with this requirement is that it anchors one's field of belief and knowledge to the availability of large data sets that happen to be, not surprisingly, filled disproportionately with financial and demographic information. Thus the theorist who is partial to treating man as a rational economic maximizer, and who disregards any noneconometric evidence to the con-

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trary as "unscientific," surrounds himself only with confirming evidence and rejects recalcitrant facts out of hand.

Fortunately there is a persuasive alternative theory of elections that was advanced by political scientists seven years before Peltzman's 1990 paper; that explains observed electoral outcomes just as well as, or better than, Peltzman's model; that is based on more realistic assumptions about human motivation; and that is empirically testable. Developed by Gary Jacobson and Samuel Kernell in 1983 and substantiated with additional data by Jacobson in 1997, the theory is that legislative votes and noncatastrophic economic conditions do not affect voter decisions so much as they affect decisions by potential candidates about whether to run for office—especially since the 1970s, with the decline of political parties and the rise of candidate-centered elections.[9]

While polls reveal that voters are pervasively ignorant about the economic issues that Peltzman believed they were incorporating (or acting as if they were incorporating) into their voting decisions, potential challengers and powerful supporters pay considerable attention to (political and) economic conditions. When an opponent appears weak, either due to political missteps, a voting record that can be easily attacked, or poor economic conditions, strong challengers (those who are relatively experienced or skilled and already possess high public visibility) are more likely to throw their hats into the ring. Likewise, influential supporters are more likely to invest heavily in helping such a challenger win.

This is significant when combined with survey evidence offered by Jacobson and Kernell suggesting that voters make decisions between pairs of competing candidates based more on their campaign abilities and personal attributes than on voters' evaluation of their ability to affect macroeconomic conditions. Not surprisingly, Jacobson and Kernell found that when economic conditions are poor, more experienced challengers with better financing emerge. Econometric analysis designed to assess the impact of economic conditions on voting, especially when controlling for the natural advantage of incumbents, will therefore suggest that voters are making decisions based on their evaluations of economic conditions, even if what is really happening is that economic conditions are driving the quality of challengers, which in turn drives voter decisions.

To test this hypothesis, Jacobson (1997, ch. 6) used regression analysis to distinguish the effects that presidential party and approval ratings, real per-capita income changes, and the electoral quality of a challenger have on changes in the political parties' share of seats in the

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U.S. House won in nonpresidential elections. His measure of a challenger's quality was whether she had previously held elective office, under the assumption that this is a suitable proxy for campaign skills, connections to influential supporters, charisma and speaking ability, and so forth. Jacobson found that the difference attributable to income change is three times higher when challenger quality is excluded from the equation; when it is included, the effect of income change is indistinguishable from zero.[10] The more fully specified equation revealed that every percentage point of difference between Republicans and Democrats in terms of challenger quality yielded a shift of 1.8 House seats. In short, Jacobson's analysis indicates that challenger quality is a better predictor of election outcomes than changes in per-capita income. All the better is the fact that this model provides an explanation of its predictions that does not amount to the a-priori assertion that all people everywhere are maximizers of their self-interest.

Perhaps the most interesting observation that arises from a comparison of Peltzman with Jacobson and Kernell is their congruence at the macro level. Both models suggest that somehow, legislators are rewarded for good economic performance and punished for bad economic performance.[11] Peltzman believes that knowing that voters behave *as if* they are aware of legislators' impact on economic conditions helps close the theoretical gap created by the fact that "we do not know why [economic conditions] matter or how plausibly to characterize the process by which voters translate information about economic conditions into voting decisions" (78). At the same time, he acknowledges at the end of his 1990 paper that his analysis "deepens the mystery" surrounding the picture of voters who are instrumentally rational, yet who gather—in what can fairly be described as an irrational act, given the individual's odds of influencing an election outcome—extensive information about candidates.

If one wants to know how the electoral accountability Peltzman uncovered actually comes about, it appears that economic theory is not as helpful as an awareness of what voters, candidates, and supporters actually know, and how they factor their knowledge (or lack of it) into their decisions. In this case Peltzman's "as-if" answer is not as illuminating as Jacobson's empirical analysis:

> The choice between pairs of candidates across states and districts . . . varies systematically with the strategic decisions of potential candidates

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> and associated activists. These decisions are . . . informed by perceptions of national political and economic conditions. Voters need only respond to the choice between candidates and campaigns at the local level to reflect, in their aggregate behavior, national political forces. Pervasive individual [voter] rationality . . . is not essential for the process to work. The intervening strategic decisions of congressional elites provide a mechanism sufficient to explain how national forces can come to be expressed in congressional election outcomes. (Jacobsen 1997, 135.)

The Monologue of Economics

Throughout this volume Peltzman's ingenuity in both model construction and data analysis is apparent, yet his improvements upon previous economic inquiries also serve to illuminate more glaringly what seem to be fundamental flaws in the entire enterprise of the economic analysis of politics. These flaws are symptoms of a disciplinary self-absorption among economists that is rightly perceived by outsiders as antithetical to intellectual inquiry and as baselessly arrogant. An excerpt from Peltzman's 1984 paper is illustrative:

> Suppose an economist initially seeks to explain auto purchases with two variables—price and party registration—and he finds that party is clearly the more important of the two variables. An economist, *unlike a sociologist or a political scientist*, would probably suspect that party is simply a proxy for income. (15, emph. added.)

Of course this example is loaded. The real question is how an economist will approach not a universally understood transaction, but instead an activity surrounded by multiple contexts and a variety of plausible actor motivations. Given the work of Peltzman and other economists in the area of political analysis, it appears that in the latter situation an economist, unlike a sociologist or political scientist, would: (a) consult little literature on this activity not written by other economists; (b) assume a priori that the actors are driven almost exclusively by narrowly defined economic self-interest; and (c) prefer econometric analysis over simpler but time-proven methods of investigation, like *asking the people involved why they do what they do.*[12]

The difficulties with (b) should be clear from the aforementioned discussion. Regarding (a), in a volume containing ten academic papers on political participation, government regulation, and public policy, I

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found hundreds of references to economists, 14 references to work by political scientists, and none to work by sociologists or historians. If the examples I have discussed are not enough, consider the fact that political scientists had identified the crucial need to distinguish supporters from general constituents at least six years before the debate among economists on legislator "shirking" began, and 11 years before Peltzman weighed in.

As for (c), it is telling that none of Peltzman's work, nor the work that he cites, refers to surveys or interviews with the people whose behavior it seeks to explain. Economists have pioneered extremely useful methods of statistical analysis from which other disciplines have benefited greatly, yet they seem reluctant to use methods that have generated a wealth of information in adjacent fields. To take just one example of how much could be gained, consider how political scientist Gregory Markus (1987 and 1992) was able to separate the effects of personal from national economic conditions on voting by using National Election Study surveys. His work exhibits the econometric rigor dear to economists, yet it is based on more reliable data: namely, the reports of voters about why they voted the way they did. This is not to say that surveys by themselves are always definitive, but there is no reason to ignore them given their potential to illuminate the "preferences" that are supposed to motivate *Homo economicus*.

In order to model purposive behavior, a theorist must make assumptions (based on theory, empirical observations, or some combination of these) about the actor's preferences. Economists tend to model voters, legislators, and regulators as resource maximizers (with resources defined broadly enough to include votes in the case of legislators, and political support in the case of regulators). While no doubt a safe assumption in many contexts—according to the criteria of plausibility as well as relative predictive power—eventually the selfish-maximization assumption must confront alternative hypotheses. (Geoffrey Brennan and Loren Lomasky [1997], to take one example, have argued that an indication of rationality in a voter is the fact that he does *not* consistently vote for outcomes that are in his best economic interest.) While acknowledging the possibility of alternative preferences, Peltzman and other economists often hew to the resource-maximizing assumption anyway, despite the plausibility of alternatives and the availability of methods that can reveal political actors' preferences more directly than goodness-of-fit statistics in regression models.

Even after noting in his 1990 paper, for example, that the *Homo eco-*

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nomicus model of voters is paradoxical (79), given the cost to a voter of voting and of obtaining information on legislator actions, coupled with the minuscule likelihood that her vote will affect the outcome, Peltzman is undeterred. In a triumph of empiricism over theory, the consistency of his econometric model with the assumption of well-informed voters appears proof enough for Peltzman that they indeed are well informed, despite the internal incoherence of that assumption. It appears that when faced with evidence that a fundamental assumption of his discipline is invalid, an economist, unlike a sociologist or a political scientist, will make the assumption anyway, so long as the final regression results do not disagree.

The Economics of Regulation

One way to look at the two primary topics captured in the title of Peltzman's book—political participation and government regulation—is to observe that "political participation" refers to behavior that takes place in the political realm (although it can be shaped by economic interests), while the "government regulation" in question takes place in the economic realm. This may explain why, even though Peltzman's analysis of political participation at many points rings hollow to the ears of a political scientist, his work on economic regulation appears on much firmer ground; indeed, it is probably not controversial to assert that his is among the pre-eminent research and analysis in this area.

To understand the depth both of Peltzman's analytical capacity and his contribution to the economic theory of regulation, it is helpful to read his papers in the second half of *Political Participation and Government Regulation* out of order. In two papers, "Current Developments in the Economics of Regulation" (1981) (ch. 8) and "The Economic Theory of Regulation after a Decade of Deregulation" (1989) (ch. 9), Peltzman provided lucid surveys of the literature that were refreshing changes from much work on the topic. As Peltzman observed in 1981 regarding theories of market failure (more below): "vague beliefs are now enshrined in jargon and clothed in formal models which give them the correct ritual flavor and exclude the uninitiated" (277).

In his 1981 paper Peltzman described the evolution of perspectives on government economic regulation as beginning with an early public-interest view (traceable at least to Adam Smith, as Peltzman noted in 1989) that inferred from market failures in some industries a genuine

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need for regulation. Two papers dramatically shifted this perspective: one by George Stigler and Claire Friedland (1962), in which they showed that electrical-utility regulation had not produced lower electricity rates; and a second by Stigler (1971) that provided a model of regulators as rational self-interested actors. Peltzman provided an insightful summary and critique of both papers in "George Stigler's Contribution to the Economic Analysis of Regulation" (1993) (ch. 10), where he credited Stigler's papers with spawning "the 'capture' view of regulation, whereby compact interest groups, usually of producers rather than consumers, were held to dominate regulatory decisionmaking" (272). However, Peltzman (325) observed,

> the main problem with this professional consensus [regarding market failure as the source of regulation] was that it had never been subject to empirical verification prior to 1962. The tendency of economists to accept without examination the effects of a wide range of government regulation was pervasive.

Thus, the capture theory began to confront problems, described by Peltzman in 1981 as "creeping realism" (272), as economists began to realize that complicating factors like mixed goals and implicit bargaining on the part of regulators have the potential to produce outcomes not predicted by the simple capture view (even if regulators are assumed to be self-interested maximizers). Peltzman pointed to work by other economists illustrating how regulations that are inefficient, according to contemporary theory, were in fact a natural outgrowth of the desire by regulators to build supporting coalitions (Leone and Jackson 1981). Others found evidence that some regulations benefiting consumers may yield net positive economic gains, such that regulation can be viewed as more than the reallocation of profits (Munch and Smallwood 1981). Though more complex than their progenitor, these modifications were still rooted in Stigler's rational-choice approach, yielding a growing body of work that has properly come to be called the economic theory of regulation.

Peltzman displays not only a thorough command of this theory's strengths and weaknesses, but a wonderful ability to ask precise questions designed to challenge its very foundations. Consider his comments (277–78) on the state of thinking among economists about market failures:

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> This degree of concern for empirical relevance does not, however, seem to carry over to our treatment of market-failure issues. If someone today asserted that any substantial reduction in pollution would have trivial benefits, or that the resources spent in the name of pollution control had trivial effects on pollution, there would be no substantial concrete basis for laughing him out of court. For all we know, this regulation may be only [a] disguised form of entry control . . . or a WPA project for the suppliers of control equipment, or something else that would call for a fundamentally different analytical framework than we have so far brought to bear.

Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to characterize Peltzman's remarks in these papers as a gold mine of potential research topics. Regarding safety, for example, he recommends determining the extent to which prices vary with product quality (or pay with job quality) as a means of assessing how much the market values regulations in these areas. To determine whether "deadweight losses" (negative effects to some groups that are not offset by positive gains to others) would indeed be large without regulation, Peltzman suggests doing a comparative study of the activity in question across international jurisdictions. If the vast majority of similarly developed jurisdictions regulate this activity, that may be an indication, reasoned Peltzman, that large deadweight losses would otherwise accrue. If the record is spotty, this variation is itself an opportunity to actually measure the extent of deadweight losses.

Perhaps Peltzman's deepest contribution to the economic theory of regulation came in "Toward a More General Theory of Regulation" (1976) (ch. 6), which he describes in the forward to this volume as one of his most influential works (ix). Relying on the rigorous mathematical expression of his basic assumptions about the preferences and behavior of regulators, regulated groups, and outsiders, Peltzman set forth convincing arguments that by necessity government regulation, even when the regulating agency is dominated by regulated interests, must distribute some benefits to nonregulated groups. What is more, the regulator has incentives to be an arbitrator between producers and consumers, making adjustments based on market changes (such as a decline in demand or in production cost) so that the equilibrium distribution of benefits between the two groups remains stable. Peltzman's analysis implies that the capture theory misses important nuances in the political incentives for regulators that work in favor of consumers.

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Another source of "creeping realism" was the widespread deregulation in the United States during the late 1970s, a trend that created problems that the economic theory of regulation, as it stood, seemed ill equipped to handle. In his 1989 paper Peltzman provided a model of regulatory entry and exit to address this shortcoming, which, although highlighted by deregulation, had been implicit in the economic theory of regulation all along. According to Peltzman, the two competing explanations for the formation of regulatory bodies, the public-interest theory and the economic theory (as it stood at the time), poorly predicted both the emergence and the elimination of such bodies. On the one hand, numerous regulations—such as many professional licensing requirements, trucking regulation, and several banking and finance restrictions—are demonstrably not, according to most economists, in the public interest (302). Peltzman (301) quipped:

> To be sure, a good economist needs no more than fifteen minutes' notice to produce a market failure to "explain" any of these interventions. But credulity is strained when the list of market failures grows at roughly the same rate as the number of regulatory agencies.

On the other hand, the economic theory had little success explaining why more industries weren't regulated—let alone why many once-regulated industries were deregulated in the 1970s—given its assumption of power-seeking regulators (299–300). In short, Peltzman concluded, the public-interest theory underpredicts regulation, while the economic theory overpredicts it.

Peltzman extended the economic theory to regulatory entry and exit by arguing that the condition likely to yield the creation of a regulatory body, "a wide discrepancy between the political balance of pressures and the unregulated distribution of wealth" (320), would eventually deteriorate as a consequence of technological change, economic competition, and the regulation itself, leading in many cases to an eventual end to the regulation. By dispersing excessive producer profits and hamstringing innovation, then, regulations may well carry the seeds of their own demise. Peltzman concluded by noting that the economic theory could not explain some American regulatory experiences, such as those in trucking and telecommunications. More significant was the apparent inability of this theory to explain both why regulators didn't seize some available opportunities to preserve regulatory rents (as predicted by a theory that treats them as self-interested maximizers), and why deregu-

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lation was the dominant option chosen by others in response to the erosion of producer profits.

Reconsidering Assumptions

Even regarding regulatory theory, however, Peltzman is vulnerable to the criticism that there are more plausible alternative explanations of the phenomena he has sought to explain. In his defense, Peltzman writes (303):

> Here I ignore these political factors, partly because economists have so far had limited success in pinning them down, but mainly because the more familiar terrain of the economic factors is sufficiently fertile.

For someone interested in whether the economic theory of regulation affords a reliable explanation of real-world institutions and events, however, alternative hypotheses may well be worth consideration when compared to Peltzman's and other economists' assumptions: that regulators seek to maximize political returns, and that fragmented government institutions have a negligible effect on the very concept of a "regulator" as a uniform and predictable actor.

The first assumption, for example, comes into play when Peltzman (176) tries to explain the cross-subsidization of higher-cost customers by lower-cost customers through flat pricing structures, a common tendency in a variety of regulated industries. Peltzman theorizes that, assuming he is a self-interested maximizer, a regulator would want to minimize interest-group opposition to his regulatory scheme. Relying on mathematical modeling, Peltzman goes on to demonstrate that the regulator would benefit most from cross-subsidization. An alternative hypothesis that also explains cross-subsidization, however, is that regulators genuinely seek to ensure public safety, or to spread the benefits of an industry to users who otherwise would be unable to afford them. One or both of these arguments have been advanced to defend airline, telephone, electricity, and drug regulation, as well as to oppose privatizing the U.S. Postal Service.

The unitary-regulator assumption is crucial because, in the economics literature, regulation is effected by a tight linkage between legislators, who seek to maximize votes, and bureaucrats—who possess a deep knowledge of the economics and structure of an industry. It is pre-

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sumed that the bureaucrats either obey the instructions of legislators, or are curbed by legislators from acting in ways that might anger their constituents. Peltzman described this relationship in his 1976 paper (158):

> Though appointment of a regulatory body may lie effectively with a legislature, a committee thereof, or an executive, the electorate's receptivity to these intermediaries ought to be affected by the performance of their appointees.

A brief consideration of the differences between this model of the regulatory process and one informed by political science and sociology may be informative.

The first clarification, of course, is that in reality there is no such thing as the "regulator" found in the economics literature. There are at least four institutions whose officials, acting under very different norms, procedures, knowledge, and training, profoundly influence the shape of regulatory policy. Legislators, regulatory-agency officials, executive-branch officials,[13] and judges influence regulations in ways that vary across time and subject matter. Given their fragmented and often conflicting modes of influence, it is reasonable to ask both whether the theoretical regulator can be considered rational enough to match the economic theory, and whether her preferences are well formed enough to make maximization a meaningful concept. In short, if the gaps in and between knowledge, decisions, implementation, and the monitoring of regulations are wide enough, we may have reason to question the viability of the economic theory as a source of understanding, prediction, or prescription.[14]

As in the case of legislative elections, it is not enough merely to question the assumptions made by Peltzman and other economists. But, as in that case, there is at least one widely regarded work that does not rest on implausible assumptions. John W. Kingdon's *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (1984) combines rich contextual detail with a modified version of Michael Cohen, James March, and Johan Olsen's "Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice" (1972) to explain both gradual and drastic policy change:

> Three process streams [flow] through the system—streams of problems, policies, and politics. They are largely independent of one another, and each develops according to its own dynamics and rules. But at some critical junctures the three streams are joined, and the greatest policy

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> changes grow out of that coupling of problems, policy proposals, and politics. (Kingdon 1984, 19.)

In Kingdon's account, problems rise to the attention and agendas of decision makers through several avenues, prompting as solutions various policy proposals. Many of these solutions exist *before* the problems to which they are ultimately linked (Kingdon offers as one example the fact that waterway user charges originated from the use of such charges in other transportation modes), whether because they have dedicated advocates or simply because decision makers tend to fall back on what they know. These streams interact in an environment of elections, macroeconomic performance, and self-interested behavior among bureaucrats and politicians. Successfully coupling solutions to problems most often requires that "policy windows"—highly publicized disasters, a change in political leadership, other opportunities—open, enabling policy entrepreneurs to act. Based on his interviews with numerous players in the public-policy field, Kingdon concluded that problems and politics set the governmental agenda, while policy activists produce the alternatives that are—eventually—matched to items on the agenda (ibid., 194).

Although many who are knowledgeable about politics and policy find Kingdon's description accurate, it does not offer precise predictive power. He acknowledges that his model has outcomes that "can be quite unpredictable."

> An administration proposes a bill, then is unable to control subsequent happenings and predict the result. Solutions become attached to problems, even though the problems themselves did not necessarily dictate those particular solutions. Thus a mine disaster sparks legislation not only for mine safety, but also for black lung disease. . . . Once the agenda is set, control over the process is lost. (Kingdon 1984, 177–78.)

An economist might look at this example and argue that, while the black-lung disease legislation wasn't itself predictable from the economic model,[15] one can predict that regulators and politicians will act to establish rents that increase their economic or political payoff once a policy window opens. This may well be true, and Kingdon's model seems useful as a means of predicting how, given such motivations, policies tend to come in waves. Policy windows create entrepreneurial opportunities, one might say, by rapidly changing the subjective values of "customers" (citizens, interest groups, business firms) and the informa-

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tion available to decision makers, much the way such opportunities emerge (or are created) in the economic marketplace.[16]

But Kingdon's model possesses even greater macropredictive power (for lack of a better term) than does the economic theory of regulation. While it is no better at predicting precise policy outcomes, the model offers global predictions, such as the claim that policy solutions will tend to float around among interest groups and administrative agencies for years, sometimes decades, before finally attaching themselves to a problem. Likewise, a problem (e.g., the deadweight loss resulting from some form of regulation) may go unsolved for years until the right combination of political actors arises. For instance, Kingdon argues —quite sensibly, except in the world of economists—that the appointments of successive chairmen of the Civil Aeronautics Board partial to deregulation, along with the departure of several members who favored regulation, was essential to reform. Sen. Edward Kennedy's hearings on deregulation in a Judiciary subcommittee also served to spark reform by creating an intense competition with Sen. Howard Cannon's aviation subcommittee; Cannon, Kingdon maintains, held hearings in order to protect his turf from Kennedy. Kingdon (1984, 11) holds that this groundwork primed aviation deregulation to be one of the first items on newly elected President Carter's "get-government-off-your-back" agenda. This momentum then carried into other areas: "At that point, policy makers' attention turned with a vengeance to the other transportation modes." Kingdon also shows how deregulation mushroomed as an issue (and as a floating solution) among the network of policy elites he interviewed.

Kingdon implies that the "market" for policies is beset by both high transaction costs and dispersed information. Such an environment can be expected to produce waves of related policies sparked by attention-getting "crises," interspersed with periods of stasis. This is because the events that arouse public opinion serve, for a particular problem, to increase both the payoff for addressing it that accrues to political entrepreneurs, and the amount of information shared by relevant actors, even while it shapes the subjective values those actors use in selecting among policy options. If a policy is enacted, the resulting momentum reduces the transaction costs of taking actions in related areas (such as coal-mine legislation to address black-lung disease, or airline and trucking deregulation to address declining profits). At some point, however, the vein of public attention is tapped and action in the affected policy area ends, at least for a time, as policy entrepreneurs move on to more fruitful areas.

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When added to Peltzman's argument that deregulation was a natural result of the interplay between political actors' preferences and economic forces, Kingdon's attribution of structural power to changes in public opinion produces a portrait of a U.S. trend toward deregulation that is as predictable (at least retrospectively) as it would have been using Peltzman's model, but with the origin of deregulation and its subsequent speed and vicissitudes better explained by Kingdon.

* * *

The case of deregulation illustrates the untapped potential of an interdisciplinary approach to institutions. Economics, with its focus on rules, individual actors' preferences, and their resulting interaction, can provide a rich understanding of political institutions, and quite possibly of mass political behavior. It is probably not sufficient, however, any more than traditional sociological models were. Increasingly it appears that the future of research into any level of human behavior, from the individual to the organization, will be most fruitful when it is organized around the unit (or units) of analysis, rather than the discipline from which one draws one's tools. Disciplinary insularity leads to hyperspecialized irrelevancy when compared to the proliferation of research tools and the continual alteration of "models" that can be expected once the models are directed toward the reality that forms the unit of analysis.

It is often said that to someone with a hammer, every problem seems to be a nail. Despite Peltzman's efforts at creative hammering, his research is still too bound by his discipline to offer us anything approaching a realistic picture of politics.

NOTES

1. Of course this assumes that constituents have lower preferences for ideological satisfaction than for economic satisfaction, and that their interests can be separated in such a fashion for the purposes of econometric analysis. I discuss these problems briefly below.
2. Most of the work by economists in this area (including Peltzman's), along with some by political scientists, measures ideology by using scores provided by interest groups such as Americans for Democratic Action. Since these scores are based on legislators' voting records, using them as an independent variable means that one is explaining votes with votes—so it should not be surprising when the score turns out to be a significant predictor of behavior. For a com-

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plete explanation of the problems with this approach, along with recommendations for improvements, see Jackson and Kingdon 1992.

3. There is a critical flaw in Peltzman's 1984 paper—the use of stepwise regression. This involves inserting one variable after another into an equation, until adding additional variables explains little of the remaining variance in the dependent variable. This is problematic when the explanatory variables are collinear, because the order in which they are inserted affects whether some variables are attributed much explanatory power at all. More complete discussions are available in any introductory text on econometrics, such as Hanushek and Jackson 1977.
4. One could argue that in the long run, the opportunity cost to the poor of electing a liberal is greater because of reductions in economic growth that result from excessive redistribution. Peltzman's characterization assumes that the average poor voter either doesn't perceive the structure of "voting costs" this way, or else discounts future earnings to the point at which the payoff from greater long-term economic growth is less than the more immediate payoff of redistribution. Underlying these assumptions, of course, are the further assumptions that voters keep track of how their legislators vote, and that they make their electoral decisions accordingly.
5. It is necessary to distinguish whites from blacks when assessing the extent of Southern conservatism because conservatism has historically been largely reflected in white rather than black attitudes.
6. Contrasted with "predictive," on which more below.
7. To be sure, the beginning of this tradition may well have been based on rational economic considerations, but there is little evidence that this reasoning repeats itself in each generation; party identification tends to be absorbed by children in the absence of critical reflection.
8. In fairness to Friedman, he did allow for testing hypotheses based on the implications of their assumptions for other hypotheses. His main goal was to rebut the notion that proving assumptions unrealistic is, in itself, a sufficient argument against a hypothesis.
9. As opposed to party-centered elections, which, by their nature, focus more on such national issues as the macroeconomy.
10. In other words, the standard error was higher than the estimated coefficient, so one can have little confidence in the estimate.
11. Jacobson and Kernell's work is, however, more easily extended into other issue areas: strong potential challengers may, for example, decide to enter a race because of an incumbent's positions on civil liberties or his recently revealed adulterous affair. The end result would be that the incumbent is "held responsible" by voters for actions beyond his votes on economic issues.
12. Of course many economists are very interdisciplinary (Nobel laureate Douglass North is a prime example; see also Caplan 2000), while noneconomists can be among the most rigid of academic isolationsists.
13. Regulatory-agency and executive-branch officials are technically part of the same institution, but in terms of the variables that matter most in this discus-

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sion—norms, incentives, knowledge, ability, and mental models—they are clearly distinguishable from one another.

14. A few exemplary works that illustrate the difficulties of governing bureaucracy and implementing policy are Light 1983; Pressman and Wildavksy 1984; Riley 1987; and Wildavsky 1987 and 1988.
15. At least not yet; there is always the faint hope among many economists that, with enough knowledge about preference functions, the modeler can make predictions at this level.
16. For an excellent discussion of the concept of political entrepreneurs, see Schneider, Teske, and Mintrom 1995.

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Reihan Salam

THE CONFOUNDING STATE: PUBLIC IGNORANCE AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

ABSTRACT: *Agencies of the modern state, democratic and otherwise, manufacture pliant publics through sophisticated social-scientific technologies ranging from wealth redistribution (which defines the contours of social relations) to the institutionalization of ethnicity (which exploits sociocultural cleavages for a variety of often contradictory purposes). The very sophistication of these technologies defies comprehension; that is, it engenders and exacerbates public ignorance. As a result, democratic surveillance of state power is more enabling myth than fact.*

According to Max Weber's definition—still the most insightful and precise—the state is that agency to which a society gives the monopoly of legitimate violence. "Legitimate," of course, is the crucial modifier. In order to avoid violent uprisings or sustained civil disobedience, coercive authority must be looked upon as just or, failing that, inescapable. Authority must be made natural, a move that requires discursive as well as temporal power. Consent is crucial; in its absence, bureaucratic rule can be an expensive proposition. For democratic states, the question of consent is particularly important; in the American tradition, the "consent of the governed" is *the* source of state legitimacy, an ideological understanding that is widely held. Indeed, the corresponding logic of "popular sovereignty" and self-government suggests that a democratic mass

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public, through its representatives, must control the levers of power. As a result, pervasive public ignorance, recorded time and again in countless studies, poses a formidable problem for partisans of the classical democratic faith.

Consider, then, the following model. Modern democratic societies, nigh all of which are "imagined communities" with great internal heterogeneity and, by definition, social complexity, defy the deliberative paradigm of consent achieved through communicative action, due to mass public ignorance and incomprehension; instead, consent is manufactured, it is an ideological effect of administrative power. The means by which consent is manufactured include the institutionalization of ethnicity and the creation of a welfare-state apparatus that meets social needs and mitigates social conflict, including challenges to state authority. But these institutions require a level of technical expertise that necessarily precludes the possibility of mass comprehension. The state confounds both any active Weberian legitimacy and any effective attempts at resistance. In this essay, I offer a tentative outline of this process, situating it within the existing literature on ethnic identity and providing illustrative examples.

From Fear to Allegiance

Rather than look upon the state as little more than an arena for the interplay of socioeconomic forces and conflicts—a view that corresponds well to the liberal normative idealization—a generation of social thinkers often known as "the new institutionalists," led by Theda Skocpol among others, have argued that the state is, in fact,

> a set of administrative, policing, and military organizations headed by an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organizations. (Skocpol 1979, 29.)

As such, states have a capacity for autonomy from various social forces, including the dominant social class, a capacity that varies across geopolitical and economic circumstances (ibid., 29–30).

Following in the realist tradition of Weber, Skocpol spends relatively little time on legitimacy as an explanatory concept: provided that the state is successful in maintaining order, key social groups will, in most

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instances, accept its legitimacy, whether understood as "moral approval or in the probably much more usual sense of sheer acceptance of the status quo" (Skocpol 1979, 32). Loss of legitimacy due to a failure to cope with existing tasks is to be avoided, but needn't be fatal to the state provided its coercive powers remained intact—that is, provided the state remains capable of subduing rebellions (ibid.).

In focusing on revolutionary challenges to premodern states, Skocpol emphasizes the importance of military capacity, which can make the difference between a weak state that fails and a strong state that succeeds in suppressing challenges to its authority; and financial capacity, which fuels military capacity and reduces a state's reliance on independent social forces. Instilling fear in the hearts of those who would contest the state's primacy is the essential function of state power at this stage. The key post-revolutionary transformation in France, Russia, and China, Skocpol maintains, was the advent of strengthened states, "more centralized, bureaucratic, and autonomously powerful" (Skocpol 1979, 285) than those that had come before, a fact that appears to bolster Weber's claim that "revolutions function in the end to further bureaucratic domination, all the more inevitably so to the extent that they establish state controls over the economy"(ibid., 286).

Though Skocpol doesn't embrace Weber's hypothesis in *States and Social Revolutions*, she acknowledges its salience (ibid., 286–87). At the end of this study, Skocpol speculates that a social revolution in an advanced industrial society would be very different from those that occurred in premodern France, Russia, and China, because "it seems highly unlikely that modern states could disintegrate as administrative-coercive organizations without destroying societies at the same time"(ibid., 293). This observation, nothing more than an aside, tentatively suggests that there has been a shift in the source of state power. In advanced industrial societies, state power is intimately bound together with the fabric of social life.

Beyond coercive power—a factor that can, in a democratic society, be looked upon as external to the workings of "the public sphere"—there is a kind of state power that shapes society itself. This is a process designed to enhance state autonomy through "state projects of legibility and simplification," as described by James Scott in *Seeing Like a State* (1998). Just as George Orwell's Newspeak minimized the possibility of revolt by manipulating human language, with its infinite cognizable and manageable potentialities, state power, dedicated to

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preserving order and extracting resources, has often been used to control and limit the grammar of protest. Counterdiscourses and moments of dissent are reimagined and assimilated into existing structures as stable enemies, a process described in the work of Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward (1979). Moreover, the agencies that turn citizens into clients of state power, in the process standardizing and simplifying countless different forms of life, employ techniques so sophisticated and specialized as to defy effective comprehension, let alone control, on the part of the mass public: dissent is mollified *and* informational burdens are created in such a way as to make pervasive public ignorance inevitable. This may be more crucial to the autonomy of modern democratic states than even fear of armed reprisals from the state's coercive agencies. Consider, for example, the welfare state in contemporary democratic societies.

The Welfare State as Source of Autonomy and Ignorance

As Iris Marion Young (2000, 247) argues, most theorizing about social justice focuses on the distribution of material goods and resources, in large part because

> public political dispute in welfare corporate society is largely restricted to issues of taxation, and the allocation of social funds among competing interests. Public discussions of social injustice tend to revolve around inequalities of wealth and income, and the extent to which the state can or should mitigate the suffering of the poor.

Young believes that in assuming this institutional context, the distributive paradigm avoids noticing specific institutional structures, including bureaucracies and welfare agencies that are separated from the day-to-day lives of the vast majority (ibid., 249). In his observations on the colonization of the lifeworld, Jürgen Habermas offers a related criticism of the manner in which money and administrative power trump and undermine rational public discussion. The stratification of decision-making power found in modern democratic societies is, according to Young, assumed in most contemporary philosophical discussions. For Young (2000, 250), economic domination is not simply a function of inequality of wealth or income; it derives "as much from corporate and legal structures and procedures that give some persons the power to

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make decisions"—precisely the inequality between those who hold the levers of state power and those who do not. More often than not, authors in the tradition Young criticizes neglect the autonomy of the state, assuming, in line with liberal normative ideals, that the state is nothing more than an arena for various social groups that responds to them mechanically without prerogatives of its own.

If we accept, however, that states can indeed be autonomous, what is it that motivates states, that animates the institutional context masked by the distributive paradigm Young describes? In *The Grabbing Hand* (1998), economists Andrei Shleifer and Robert Vishny offer an answer. Reflecting on economists' conventional views of the state, Shleifer and Vishny (1998, 2) first dismiss the "helping-hand" model, which advocates "massive state intervention in markets to cure so-called market failures," because in reality "governments pursue interventions such as state ownership and agricultural supports that serve their political goals and only occasionally coincide with social welfare" (ibid., 3). Ignoring state autonomy, the helping-hand model assumes that the state seeks to maximize social welfare rather than its own power or well-being. In a similar vein, the authors reject the invisible-hand model, the view that the state should ignore all but the core functions of public administration (such as law, order, and national defense)—a prescriptive model that has little to say about the real world because it again ignores the state's own imperatives, rendering its policy prescriptions unrealistic. Instead, the authors offer their own grabbing-hand model, a view that centers on the appetites of an autonomous state and assumes that agents of the state "do not maximize social welfare and instead pursue their own selfish objectives" (ibid., 4).

Skocpol (1992, 527) reaches a similar, albeit less harsh, conclusion: "Acting in pursuit of their career interests . . . leaders try to use existing governmental and party organizations to devise and implement policies that will attract support from various social groups"—hardly a description of disinterested state action oriented solely towards meeting real human needs. Indeed, a cynic would argue that leaving certain populations in dependent and impoverished conditions might prove efficacious in advancing state power. A welfare-state apparatus that functions smoothly and efficiently can routinize and thus effectively legitimate such a state of affairs. Social groups that would otherwise pose a challenge to existing hierarchies can be mollified. Under these conditions, there would be virtually no social space free

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of state domination, so meaningful democratic control of the state would be effectively impossible.

The welfare state, according to Habermas (1985, 351), secures "the pacification of the sphere of social labor and the neutralization of participation in the political decision-making processes." "There is a guaranteeing of freedom embodied in the welfare state, particularly insofar as it lessens the tyranny of deprivation, and at the same time a taking away of freedom" (ibid., 361). The very bureaucratization that enables an effective social-welfare policy serves as a "restructuring intervention in the lifeworld" (ibid., 362). Quoting E. Reidegold, Habermas notes that programs ostensibly aimed at promoting independence by reducing physical deprivation actually reduce independence due to the nature of bureaucratic authority:

> "The process of providing social services takes on a reality of its own, nurtured above all by the professional competence of public officials, the framework of administrative action, biographical and current 'findings,' the readiness and ability to cooperate of the person seeking the service or being subjected to it. In these areas too there remain problems with the class-specific utilization of such services, with the assignments made by the courts, the prison system and other offices, and with the appropriate location and arrangement of the services within the network of bureaucratic organizations of the welfare state; but beyond this, such forms of physical, psycho-social and emancipatory aid really require modes of operation, rationality criteria and organizational forms that are foreign to bureaucratically structured administration." (Quoted in Habermas 1985, 363.)

The sophistication, and insulation, of effective welfare bureaucracies is inextricably linked with patterns of social control. As Hugh Heclo argues in *Modern Social Politics in Britain and Sweden* (1974), the crucial contributors to the development of social-welfare programs in those countries have been civil-service administrators, individuals with a vast amount of specialized knowledge, rather than political leaders or even external interest groups. Though we can imagine a benevolent post-bureaucratic welfare state truly geared toward securing real freedom for all, the grabbing-hand model suggests that this end is unlikely: self-interested agents of the state, and the autonomous state itself, have no reason to pursue such an agenda.

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Gellnerian Reflections on State and Nation

Though fear alone will prevent rebellions, it will also prevent the extractive and regulatory feats modern states, which control some of the most intimate aspects of our lives and command vast resources for welfare-state and other redistributive purposes. To insinuate itself into every dimension of life, the state must secure the active cooperation of the public. By securing the allegiance of the mass public by redistributing income and institutionalizing ethnicity, the state dramatically increases its ability to control society. In his theory of nationalism, Ernest Gellner (1983) suggests that social-scientific technologies such as these, techniques that make the lived lives of ordinary women and men comprehensible to bureaucracies, are integral to the modern state.

For Gellner (1983, 5), the industrial era is defined by the presence of the state, which plays the crucial role in the transition from agro-literate to modern society. In agro-literate societies, horizontal cultural cleavages, between the rulers and ruled for example, are advantageous (ibid., 11). Such societies are both mobile and stable, and so there is no need for a monochrome homogeneity to allow societies to withstand the pressures of mobility (ibid., 12–13). Modern industrial societies, in contrast, rely on sustained and perpetual growth (ibid., 22). An ever-changing, complex division of labor is needed to achieve this end, which, in turn, demands "frequent and precise communication among strangers involving a sharing of explicit meaning" (ibid., 34), undermining old social hierarchies and horizontal cultural cleavages (ibid., 24–25). The ideal of universal literacy results, which in turn requires centralized methods of social reproduction based on universal, standardized, and generic education (ibid., 29). The relationship between these methods and nationalism is clear: a single national language is taught to all, facilitating the division of labor; the "roots of nationalism in the distinctive structural requirements of industrial society are very deep indeed" (ibid., 35). Gellner argues that cultural homogeneity is thus the product of an "objective, inescapable imperative [of industrialization that] eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism" (ibid., 39).

Gellner's theory identifies one manner in which the state acts independently of social groups to achieve its ends. In the process the state defies public comprehension by constituting the public itself—a crucial function of the confounding state. Unfortunately, Gellner's

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theory of nationalism is tied to a very mechanistic model: the institutionalization of ethnicity must, he hypothesizes, take the form of a culturally homogenizing drive. In some instances, however, as we shall see, states reinforce and even manufacture cultural differences in order to facilitate their control.

The State in Society

For Joel Migdal and others identified with the "state-in-society" approach, state-centered theories suffer from a holistic and undifferentiated view of the state, a view that, *in extremis*, reifies and anthropomorphizes the state such that "the dynamics of the struggle for domination in societies" (Migdal 1994, 8) is obscured. Migdal (ibid.) maintains that undifferentiated understandings of state and society lead us to believe that these monoliths "pull in single directions." Through this prism, state/society conflicts appear to be zero-sum games; moreover, both state and society act according to a coherent logic.

In contrast, Migdal (1994, 9) calls upon scholars to disaggregate state and society and focus on a society's "multiple arenas of domination and opposition," arenas that are often far from the commanding heights of state organizations. State power thus becomes a continuum, an indeterminate quantity that varies across physical and social space in response to distinctive pressures from diverse social forces. Peripheral conflicts between state agents and social forces are mutually transforming. According to Migdal, these struggles can lead to outcomes ranging from *integrated domination*, in which the state does emerge as a coherent actor with broad power, to *dispersed domination*, in which power is vigorously contested and the state is diffuse and divided. Rather than focus on the various ways the state's machine-like bureaucratic apparatus accomplishes ends to which it is inexorably drawn, Migdal (ibid., 12) emphasizes the formulation and transformation of state goals, a process that derives from sustained engagement with different social forces.

While this approach has great value, it mustn't distract us from the central role of public ignorance in enhancing democratic state autonomy. When the state holds most of the cards, informational and otherwise, and determines the contours of the playing field, it will tend to be autonomous and it will tend to secure its ends to the extent its technologies allow. Emphasis on struggle and the internal hetero-

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geneity of the state itself does, however, shed light on substate conflicts. What happens of we try to illuminate these conflicts by comparing recent normative defenses of "the politics of identity" to a perspective on state autonomy informed by empirical research on public ignorance?

Managing the Body Politic

In light of the global resurgence of nationalist politics, countless scholars have followed Gellner's lead and turned their attention to nations and nationalism. Whereas the nation was once looked upon as an unproblematic and transhistorical phenomenon, the scholarship of Benedict Anderson (1988), Anthony D. Smith (1988), Liah Greenfeld (1993), Homi Bhabha (1990), and Partha Chatterjee (1993), among others, has challenged its privileged position. Though this new scholarship is characterized by myriad doctrinal disputes, it is defined by a common acceptance of the nation as an "imagined community," a collectivity based on shared historical memories and cultural experiences, not blood or soil. Nationhood, according to Rogers Brubaker (1996, 21), is "an institutionalized cultural and political form," and nations are a practical category, not conscious, purposeful collective actors. Indeed, Brubaker, in advocating an institutionalist approach to the study of nationalism, goes so far as to claim that nationness is "a contingent event or happening, and [one should] refrain from using the analytically dubious notion of 'nations' as substantial, enduring collectivities" (ibid.).

While one may fairly criticize Brubaker and those who share his approach, including Gellner, for going too far—after all, ethnocultural communities defined by shared language and cultural traditions, while not always institutionalized as nations, certainly are "substantial and enduring"—he does offer a useful antidote to those who look upon nations as unchanging and easily defined. National identity does not reflect a prior, primordial collective self; rather, it is part of a fluid network of representations distinguished by its privileged place—one owed to the primacy of the territorial, sovereign nation-state (Duara 1995, 229). This being the case, we may be better served by speaking of the *national* rather than the nation, for in a world of polyethnic and polylinguistic states, states are more often framed by nationhood than perfectly congruent with ethnocultural nations. In looking upon the national community as a symbolic system defined by shifting bound-

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aries, a site of cultural negotiation, we can more easily grasp the evolving character of national identity and its rival narratives.

In Canada, Spain, India, Nigeria, and Britain, among many other states, the accommodation of cultural difference has involved various forms of *asymmetrical federalism*, that is, federal or subsidiary arrangements in which "privileges are accorded to different territories and groups" (Steyn 1999, 22–23). Other states, however, have resisted this strategic creation of collective cultural rights as an illiberal innovation that undermines state coherence and cohesion. The institutionalization (and politicization) of cultural collectivities, and the concomitant "ethnicization" of constitutional politics, creates a directional and enduring logic all its own that facilitates the state's "management of the body politic"; that is, it structures ethnicity in such a way as to make it cognizable to the state's language of power.

In this light, normative defenses of different versions of the politics of identity propounded by such political theorists as Habermas and Charles Taylor appear naïve, at best.

The Power of Identity

In "The Politics of Recognition," Taylor offers a revision of liberalism designed to accommodate demands for collective cultural rights and recognition, demands that, in his view, derive from the harm caused by the *mis*recognition and *non*recognition of dispossessed cultural communities (Taylor 1994, 24). These demands are theoretically justified by the ideal of "authenticity," articulated early on by Rousseau and Herder, which offers a portrait of an individual living in accordance with that individual's unique inner nature; upon achieving this harmony with self, an individual—or, for Herder, also a culture-bearing people—attains the goal of self-fulfillment and self-realization: "dignity" (ibid., 31).

For Taylor, the ideals of authenticity and dignity are historical products of the demise of enduring social hierarchies. The theorizing of Herder and others, however, emphasized the monological dimension of achieving authenticity and dignity, an emphasis Taylor believes to be misplaced and misguided (Taylor 1994, 32). The process of becoming authentic human agents is fundamentally dialogical: to achieve an understanding of self and, as a result, a defined identity, one requires "rich human languages of expression" (ibid.). To acquire the modes of expression needed for self-definition, one must interact

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with others; consequently, these interactions—a negotiation between the internal and the external—play a crucial role in shaping identity (ibid., 32–34). As a result, the equal recognition of individuals is of profound importance: without it, demeaning images imposed from without can be internalized and cause grave damage (ibid., 36).

But the politics of equal recognition leads not only to the universalization of civil and political rights and to equality before the law, but to the recognition of *difference*, that is, recognition of the unique identities of individuals and groups (Taylor 1994, 38). Taylor contends that the latter tendency "grows organically out of the politics of universal dignity," and he analogizes it to the social-welfarist recognition of economic deprivation as an obstacle to equal dignity to be corrected through redistributive interventions. Like the conflicts surrounding the establishment of social-welfarist regimes, the conflicts surrounding the politics of difference involve rival conceptions of nondiscrimination and "favoritism" (ibid., 39). Indeed, many proponents of a universalizing politics of equal recognition oppose the differential treatment required of a state oriented toward accepting and affirming difference. Taylor rejects their reasoning, embracing instead a second mode of the politics of equal recognition that fosters particularity and recognizes the extent to which "difference-blindness" is, in practice, impossible:

> These two modes of politics, then, both based on the notion of equal respect, come into conflict. . . . The reproach the first makes to the second is just that it violates the principle of nondiscrimination. The reproach the second makes to the first is that it negates identity by forcing people into a homogeneous mold that is untrue to them. This would be bad enough if the mold were itself neutral—nobody's mold in particular. But the complaint generally goes further. The claim is that the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture. As it turns out, then, only the minority or suppressed cultures are being forced to take alien form. Consequently, the supposedly fair and difference-blind society is not only inhuman (because suppressing identities) but also, in a subtle and unconscious way, itself highly discriminatory. (Ibid., 43.)

Liberalism, as a result, cannot claim cultural neutrality (Taylor 1994, 62). To rescue liberalism, Taylor separates a narrow, procedural liberalism that always emphasizes individual rights over collective goals

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(dubbed "Liberalism 1" by Michael Walzer) from a liberalism that cautiously accepts the privileging of collective goals while respecting diversity ("Liberalism 2"). The first liberalism, the "liberalism of rights," is inhospitable to difference, for it "insists on uniform application of the rules defining these rights" and "is suspicious of collective goals," including cultural survival—a collective goal that may require deviation from "universal" principles (ibid., 60–61). The second liberalism will defend certain rights under any and all circumstances, but is willing to weigh the claims of cultural survival and, presumably, cultural flourishing, against the principle of uniform treatment. In this regard, it abandons claims of ethical neutrality and allows the state to advance a form of the good life.

Habermas (1994, 109), in his critique of Taylor's "Politics of Recognition," contends that Taylor's second liberalism, rather than correcting an inappropriate understanding of liberal principles, in fact "calls into question the individualistic core of the modern conception of freedom." Taylor's attempt to consider "a politics of consideration of cultural differences on the one hand [against] a politics of universalization of individual rights on the other," the former compensating for "the price the other exacts with its equalizing universalism," produces, for Habermas, a false dichotomy (ibid., 111). For Habermas (1994, 112), the theory of rights, that is, "Liberalism 1," is not, when properly understood, blind to cultural differences. Since the bearers of individual rights possess identities that are determined intersubjectively, the system of rights must take into account cultural differences and unequal social conditions: "a correctly understood theory of rights requires a politics of recognition that protects the integrity of the individual in the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed" (ibid., 113). No alternative model is required for a consistent actualization of a theory of rights that will accommodate struggles for recognition. Though the theory of rights does maintain the precedence of individual rights over collective goals, the democratic elaboration of a system of individual rights involves and incorporates collective goals (ibid., 123–24). Habermas (ibid., 128) maintains that

> the theory of rights in no way forbids the citizens of a democratic constitutional state to assert a conception of the good in their general legal order, a conception they either already share or have come to agree on through political discussion. It does, however, forbid them to privilege one form of life at the expense of others within the nation.

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This principle, moreover, holds at all levels of government in a federal polity, arguably weakening the claims of asymmetrical federalism. Above all else, Habermas is concerned with loyalty to a common liberal political culture. As a result, he champions a brand of constitutional patriotism that maintains a critical distinction between political integration and cultural assimilation; any state-sponsored wedding of the two would violate the claim of minorities to mutual recognition (Habermas 1994, 135). His concerns, like those of Taylor (a social democrat trying to maintain Canadian unity in the face of Québecois separatism), reflect his cultural milieu: faced with the legacy of illiberal German nationalism, Habermas is wary of surrendering an individualistically constructed theory of rights.

Habermas's argument regarding struggles for recognition is closely tied to his broader perspective on late modernity. The struggles for recognition that now animate the politics of the metropolitan West transcend traditional class conflicts over material distribution; the new conflicts take place in the lifeworld. Organized around communicative action, these new protest movements struggle over "the grammar of forms of life." Habermas sees in them an attempt to correct the modern "colonization of the lifeworld." Like earlier bourgeois emancipation movements, however, struggles for recognition essentially reinforce the modern conception of freedom.

Ordering and Unmixing Identities

Both Taylor and Habermas offer accounts of the multinational polity grounded primarily in liberal political theory. In his portrait of Soviet multinationality (1996), Rogers Brubaker, a sociologist, comes from a very different direction, one that is rooted in an understanding of the historical evolution of political institutions. This perspective, which provides both historical and geographical distance from contemporary struggles in the metropolitan West, provides valuable insight into the confounding strategies of modern states—even democratic states—that are embroiled in the politics of identity.

As the Great War drew to a close, the revolutionary transformations wrought by nationalizing autocracies in Eastern Europe came to fruition as new states emerged from the ashes of the old. Most of them, in line with the nationalist principles of the age, constituted themselves as national states, despite the many challenges posed by

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unresolvable heterogeneity. One regime, in stark contrast, defined itself in explicitly antinationalist, and indeed *post*national, terms. It is this regime, the Soviet Union, that Rogers Brubaker analyzes in "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States: An Institutionalist Account." For decades, the USSR stood as a revolutionary vanguard state, homeland to all the workers. Unlike the anti-nationalist dynastic regimes that once ruled the heart of Europe, the Soviet Union did not seek to suppress the discourse of nationality; rather, it sought to transcend it through the communist vision of universal human progress and liberation. In order to achieve this end, however, the Soviet state engineered an elaborate compromise with the principle of nationality, described by Brubaker as "institutionalized multinationality." This strategic compromise, wracked by internal contradictions and constitutive of oppositional national identities, ultimately led to the unraveling of the multinational Soviet enterprise.

Upon considering the events of 1991, one of the most remarkable facts is the manner in which the Soviet Union, one of the leading states in the international environment and a military power of great consequence, collapsed in such a rapid, orderly, and peaceful manner into fifteen sovereign national republics. Few battles were fought, and all declarations of sovereignty occurred in a decidedly legitimate manner under the banner of the Soviet Constitution. The nationalisms that now asserted themselves against the center, curiously enough, were precisely those identified, articulated, and reified through the institutions of the Soviet state; indeed, some, like those of the Central Asian Union republics, had no pre-Soviet national history to point toward. Others, like those of the Baltic republics, have been described as more national in the wake of Soviet rule than they were before it. The nationalist counterelites that went on to consolidate their power found ready-made national institutions through which to govern their populations. The transition, though certainly fraught with many problems, was eased by the Soviet Union's seamless construction.

Though the Soviet Union did not define itself as a nation-state, it did define its constituent units in those terms; consequently, national cadres and national intelligentsias were cultivated in an effort to effect a kind of nation-building at the substate level. Just as the rulers of the Habsburg and Romanov empires unintentionally fostered the source of their own demise through their use of public violence and other

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revolutionary techniques, the Soviets constructed national states that served as bases of opposition to the center and, potentially, as the locus of national longing. These Union republics, constituted from without but governed by members of the so-called titular nationalities, were implicitly empowered to continue the nation-building process. Through the use of state privileges, preference was often given to members of the titular nationality and representational technologies were employed to foster the use of its language (along with the Russian language, which was promoted as a broader medium of intellectual exchange). Though the Union republics were meant to be "national in form but socialist in content," they offered national elites opportunities for advancement predicated on nationhood, not allegiance to the communist notion of transcending the nation.

The territorial-political component of Soviet nationality policy, though perhaps the decisive factor in the collapse of the Soviet Union, was far from the sole element in its baroque construction. Soviet citizens were not merely citizens of their respective Union republics; each individual was also assigned by the state an explicit nationality, defined in ethnocultural terms. These designations were made on the basis of descent, not by subjective identification; though the children of mixed marriages were allowed to select their nationality, they were limited to those of their parents and could choose only once. The internal passports carried by all who sought employment, housing, or education identified individuals by nationality. Though at first a mere afterthought, the systematic codification of personal nationality became an integral, essential component of the Soviet management of its population. Moreover, to the extent that personal nationality had very real consequences for one's life chances, it was a matter of palpable importance that came to shape personal identity in decisive ways. Ethnocultural boundaries were established by the state in an ad hoc manner, but their constitution had many unintended consequences, including an irreconcilable cognizance of minority status for many of those in the nationalizing Union republics. The republics, in turn, often used these boundaries to facilitate their control.

The territorial-political and the ethnocultural-personal dimensions of Soviet nationality policy identified by Brubaker, though independent of one another, interacted in a complex manner. The logic of ethnoterritorial federalism led the Soviet state to establish semi-sovereign Union republics, autonomous republics, and autonomous oblasts that corresponded directly to many ethnocultural-personal

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designations (including the curious Jewish Autonomous Region in the Russian Far East). Hence, each individual, in theory, had a homeland on Soviet territory shared by others of the same ethnic ancestry. The very existence of these territories strengthened the nationhood of these often-arbitrary ethnocultural categories. At the same time, there were often radical spatial disparities between one's nationality and one's place of residence. In the Union republics, large minorities were governed by members of the titular nationalities, and yet did not identify with them.

Rather than abolish ethnocultural-personal designations, or adopt consociational arrangements that would accommodate ethnocultural-personal designations but eliminate territorial-political definitions, the regime maintained both of these mutually antagonistic definitions of nationhood. The heterogeneity of many regions, coupled with these contending models of nationhood, invited conflict. Only by allowing the territorial-political units to pursue their nationalizing mission through assimilationist policies could this contradiction be resolved, and yet that was not a viable option. Due to the presence of the supranational Soviet state, which imagined itself as a postnational socialist commonwealth, national minorities—particularly the Russian minority in the non-Russian Union republics—could not be assimilated to the titular nationalities without raising Russians' ire. The cultural rights of minorities in the Union republics were protected by the Soviet state. These problems, which were to have been obviated on the path toward communism and a post-national Soviet People, proved vexing until the last days of the regime. Soviet nationality policy, often characterized as an elaborate ruse, did indeed construct and institutionalize nationalities for its own purposes; these designations, however, came to acquire very real lives of their own.

Due to its multinational construction, the Soviet Union, in theory, was always a highly decentralized state. The parallel structures of the centralized Communist party served to undergird the state by resisting fissiparous tendencies. With the party's collapse, the centrifugal forces wrought by increasing nationalist resistance to the authority of the center led to the end of Soviet Union. But the legacy of the Soviet state and its nationality policy remain. Indeed, Brubaker characterizes the legacy of Soviet nationality policy as essential to understanding the national question in the successor states.

The continuing prevalence of ethnocultural conceptions of personal nationality has turned the question of citizenship in the now-

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sovereign national states into one of pressing importance. The "titular" nationalities, now rulers of their own sovereign states, operate on the implicit assumption, inherited from the Soviet era, that the states are the vehicles for *their* national self-determination, irrespective of the degree of heterogeneity. The national minorities within these states are now, if only figuratively, without homes. Though they may be afforded the rights of liberal citizenship—and even that is a matter of contestation—they are necessarily outsiders. The nationalizing enterprise, in theory, can now be pursued, and yet the realities of the international realm limit this possibility. The fact that members of these national minorities have been separated from their homelands has led to both alienation and irredentist sentiments. The presence of large national minorities, and the question of their loyalties, have in turn produced stringent policies directed against them in several republics. The dynamic of relationships between nationalizing states and their national minorities has also doubtless been affected by a geopolitical environment in which the Russian state—homeland, though not by legal affiliation, of 25 million Russians in the so-called "Near Abroad"—is overwhelmingly preponderant and, perhaps more worrisome, potentially revisionist.

Brubaker, in considering this explosive combination, suggests that post-Soviet Eurasia may well be a locus of severe ethnonational conflict due to the violent collision of mutually incompatible expectations of belonging. According to Brubaker, the Soviet regime, in its efforts to transcend narrow nationalisms, constructed illiberal substate nationalisms fundamentally based on blood, albeit unintentionally. By codifying nationality as an essential, integral, and largely unchangeable quality, Soviet nationality policy has left a legacy of political turmoil that derives from essential questions of identity and belonging—questions that, as constituted, are essentially unresolvable in the heterogeneous borderlands of Europe. Despite noble intentions, the multinational enterprise failed due to its contradictions.

Brubaker's portrait presents the state as the agent of this failure. Moreover, while the Soviet state was not a liberal democratic regime, its constitutional structure did formally enshrine liberal democratic principles; as a result, it serves as a salient case study of the autonomy of the liberal state. Perhaps the main lesson to be drawn is that even truly liberal state elites that are insulated by public ignorance from the pressures of civil society must sometimes face dangerous unintended consequences stemming from their autonomously enacted policies.

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What is relevant, after all, is a state's use of ethnicity in an autonomous fashion, not the democratic/public-ignorance or autocratic/public-exclusion source of the state's autonomy. But before turning to some suggestive evidence from democratic states, let us first consider the ethnic policies of another autocracy, the People's Republic of China.

Chinese State-Mandated Ethnogenesis

Though James Scott's account in *Seeing Like a State* does not directly address the state's use of ethnographic techniques, they very clearly do contribute to the project of legibility and simplification that is his topic: legibility and simplification designed to strengthen state power. In the polyglot peripheries of the old Chinese empire, many people possessed only local identities, though they shared common languages with other people in their respective regions. This posed a challenge for the census takers and anthropologists who sought to impose an ethnographic order on these regions, and so ethnonyms were invented and applied to peoples with no name and no discrete ethnic identity (Gladney 1996, 301). The modern Chinese state, in order to assimilate its internal Others, needed to identify them and delineate how they varied from the Han majority. In doing so, however, the regime objectified—and often created—ethnic identities that have served as institutional foundations for systemic resistance to assimilatory pressures (ibid., 299). Groups once despised and vilified for their difference, including the Hui, now derive great pride from the common identity that separates themselves from the majority (ibid., 300). As Dru Gladney puts it,

> In each of these cases, the label the state has assigned, no matter how ill-suited, has led to the crystallization and expression of identities within the designated group along pan-ethnic lines. While ethnogenesis and the rise of pan-ethnic identities have occurred throughout history, particularly with the incorporation of native peoples by nation-states, China represents an incubated process: What normally takes several generations for most ethnic groups has for of the identified nationalities in the PRC occurred in the last 30 years. (Ibid., 300.)

Even the former barbarians, although still on the margins of Chinese civilization, have acquired nationalities, and imagined ethnohistories, of their own. Indeed, millions of Chinese once identified with

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the Han majority have sought to identify themselves as members of ethnic minorities due to privileges associated with such a designation. Upon the establishment of these official identities, they have rapidly been appropriated and internalized by those they affect (Gladney 1996, 315).

The logic of the state demanded that China define its various peoples, and yet China's minorities have used these definitions to subvert the ideal of a homogeneous China. The authorities sought protection from the contaminating influence of radicalized minorities; however, the recent uprising in Xinjiang, along with continuing unrest in Tibet, suggest that the "health" of the Chinese nation, defined as its territorial integrity and ideological purity, is at risk. Regardless, the PRC's attempt to identify and reify its Others has, in all likelihood, facilitated its rule. The fact that all minority institutions, be they educational, cultural, or political, are necessarily arms of the state under Chinese law derives from the demands of a disciplinary society. Identity formation in the People's Republic has served to reinforce order, the central project of the modern state, as social-scientific technologies have been employed to construct and control potentially dangerous minority populations. Ultimately, however, these attempts to manage ethnic minorities may lead them from the margins of a Chinese national narrative to the centers of their own. The PRC's ethnic minorities, despite their "constructed-ness," may use the new ethnographic order to subvert the Chinese state, much like the Soviet successor states.

The Experience of the Democratic West

Though the experience of the PRC and the Soviet Union seems far removed from that of the metropolitan West, the rise of minority ethnic insurgencies has had a similarly profound effect in many of the affluent industrialized societies.

Canada, long a British dominion, may be the best-known example of a seemingly stable society riven by ethnic difference. Indeed, among theorists of multiculturalism many rue the "tyranny of the Canadian example." Its importance as an example is, however, warranted. Unlike China, political violence does not pose an imminent threat (though during the 1960s, separatist violence led to the declaration of martial law in Quebec). Furthermore, the institutionaliza-

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tion of Canadian minorities, though a process intimately linked to state policy, cannot be attributed primarily to Leninist ethnographic techniques. Even so, Canada, with significant aboriginal and francophone minorities as well as a large foreign-born population, is a society with many "identity" fault lines. Moreover, it is clear that the state has sought to institutionalize ethnicity in an attempt to minimize social disruption.

In the case of Quebec, a cultural fault line roughly coincides with a provincial boundary, a situation that has given rise to perhaps the most thoroughgoing form of asymmetrical federalism in the world. After Switzerland, the Canadian confederation is the second-most decentralized federal polity in the West; unlike Switzerland, however, authority is not granted uniformly across cantons. With each issue concerning federal-provincial relations, the government of Quebec demands unique concessions and, if only on a de-facto basis, is granted them more often than not. Today, Quebec's provincial government operates its own immigration policy separate from that of the federal government; a foreign national wishing to reside in Ontario or British Columbia must apply to the federal government; if the same foreign national wishes to reside in Montreal, it is no longer the federal government's concern (Steyn 1999, 22–23). Even Taylor (1994, 58–59) recognizes that this reflects the Quebec government's desire to actively *create* members of a francophone community in order to secure cultural survival.

Beyond this fragmentation of political authority, Canada has, in the years since the patriation of the constitution and the establishment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, experienced a very real fragmentation of citizenship. Unlike the United States Constitution, with its clear ideological emphasis on individuals (excepting references at the margins to the enslaved and aboriginal nations), the Charter, in the words of Alan Cairns (1995, 182), encourages particular identities:

> The Charter is more than an instrument that hands out abstract rights equally to all Canadians and is indifferent to their various statuses defined by gender, ethnicity, official-language status, and the presence or absence of disabilities. In fact, it specifically mobilizes Canadians to think in terms of these categories. It encourages Canadians to think of themselves for constitutional purposes as women, as official-language minorities, as disabled, or as ethnocultural Canadians. Particular Char-

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> ter clauses and the high profile of the constitution in recent years engendered constitutional discourse around gender, ethnicity, indigenousness, and so on, which join the historic constitutional languages of federalism and parliamentary government.

In rejecting the U.S. model of a uniform territorial federalism and in embracing, for constitutional purposes, a kind of nonterritorial federalism that politicizes and constitutionalizes diversity, the Canadian state has created huge opportunities for political rent-seekers:

> Organizations, often publicly funded, have developed to enhance the potency of Charter clauses relevant to their clientele. These clauses generate constitutional identities, formerly lacking, in those to whom they apply. The elites of the social categories concerned may be said to occupy constitutional niches, or to possess constitutional clauses. . . . The public profile of the social categories accorded such recognition is markedly enhanced, as is their sense of distinctiveness (Ibid.)

A traditional representative system, which holds that an individual can represent the interests of a diverse constituency, is thus undermined. The homogeneity of marginalization and coercion was not replaced by a political homogeneity based upon an equalizing universalism; rather, it was replaced by a political heterogeneity that creates rival centers of loyalty.

If Canada, like the United States, lacked a large, self-conscious, and concentrated ethnocultural minority, the fragmentation of citizenship would occur only at the margins. Canada does, however, have such a minority. During the constitutional crises of the 1980s and 1990s, francophone Quebec has sought a substantive shift in the composition of the Canadian state from a federal model to a binational or multinational model. As Quebec's constitutional demands have grown, its "two nations" model has, in a sense, been actualized as the Rest of Canada (ROC) has been forced to defend its prerogatives.

By the 1980s, the Québècois political insurgency, strengthened by postwar affluence and assertiveness, had been challenging the constitutional status quo for 20 years in a process that led to the Constitution Act of 1982. During the Meech Lake constitutional round that followed, Quebec made a number of gains; however, the other provinces followed suit, insisting on the principle of equality among provinces in all cases except recognition as a "distinct society." After the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord, and Quebec's failure to achieve

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recognition as a distinct society, the Charlottetown Accord was drafted in 1992. This accord, however, placed far greater emphasis on aboriginal demands than Québècois demands (Cairns 1995, 282). Ultimately, it failed after a string of ignominious defeats in provincial referenda. The concerns that animated Canadians in opposing the Accord, above all else, involved the redistributional indeterminacy of constitutional change: in light of the unintended consequences of previous constitutional reforms, it is likely that a wariness about dramatic change of any kind killed the "distinct society" proposal.

To this day, the Quebec government is not formally reconciled to the constitutional order established in 1982. Quebec's provincial status poses a nearly insurmountable barrier to the realization of Québècois national aspirations, though many of the trappings of nationhood have been adopted (e.g., the provincial legislature is called the National Assembly). Though Quebec's Liberal premier during the Charlottetown round would have preferred dealing with a coherent ROC in constitutional negotiations, such an actor was absent—the rest of Canada was represented instead by the pan-Canadian federal government, which was in no position to grant concessions of its own. For Cairns (1995, 312), federalism and a multinational definition of Canada are fundamentally incompatible:

> The sociological reality and self-perceptions of the Québècois as a nation can receive only limited constitutional expression as long as, constitutionally, Quebec is a province. The limited maneuverability available in responding to Quebec is a by-product of its provincial status and the contemporary federalism norms attached to that status. . . . The central cue transmitted by the formal amending process to governments and citizens outside Quebec is that any proposed constitutional response to Quebec's aspirations is to be evaluated by federalist criteria. Accordingly, an inflexible response is, in a sense, routinized by the provincial equality principle.

The federal and multinational tendencies are fundamentally antagonistic, in this view. Any kind of special status undermines the logic of a federal polity; at the same time, the reality of Quebec's national aspirations forces the Canadian state to offer concessions in the form of asymmetrical federalism. This, in turn, further irritates the other provinces. A constitutional stalemate is the result. Just as Mancur Olson (1982) argued that the accretion of distributional coalitions or interest groups in a stable society gradually undermines economic efficiency by

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causing a kind of sclerosis, Cairns (1995, 17) argues that constitutional interests, each seeking to use the constitution for its own purposes, have undermined the possibility of constitutional reform in the absence of a convulsive shock.

Like Brubaker's Soviet Union, contemporary Canada has sought to pacify national minorities by offering them political institutions and political authority. Over time, however, political and bureaucratic constituencies have emerged that are no longer satisfied by the status quo. With the control of institutions conceded in the name of social peace, Quebec's "sovereigntists" have established a powerful foundation from which to assault the existing constitutional order. At the same time, that very order prevents Québècois national aspirations from ever being realized, thus offering only one alternative: a convulsive shock. In Quebec's case, this means independence. By allowing the sovereigntists to frame the debate, those who oppose the dissolution of the Canadian state have already been defeated. Even Quebec's opposition, the provincial Liberals, strongly support recognition of Quebec as a "distinct society." The startling demographic decline of Quebec's anglophone and allophone minorities, driven in large part by the migration of those who fear francophone hegemony to Ontario and westward, reinforces this tendency. Meanwhile the concessions made in the name of asymmetrical federalism, including symbolic gestures like the abandonment of the Red Ensign in the 1960s, have undermined the historical legitimacy of the federal government.

The Labour government in Great Britain, in an attempt to satiate the Celtic communities that are a key element of its electoral coalition, is traveling down the same path. With an overwhelming parliamentary majority, Tony Blair has entered upon a dramatic program of constitutional revision. From the House of Lords to electoral reform, Blair has already made an extraordinary constitutional mark. His most important legacy, however, has surely been the devolution of power to new parliamentary bodies in Northern Ireland (replacing the Stormont parliament), Wales, and, most importantly, Scotland. England has not been granted a regional government, though regional development agencies and a regional government for London (replacing the Greater London Council abolished by Margaret Thatcher, now with an elected mayoralty) have been or are about to be established.

In a few bold strokes, Blair has irrevocably transformed the British political landscape. As the Canadian case demonstrates, once authority has been granted, it creates constituencies that jealously guard their

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inheritance. Britain has become, in a brief period, a quasifederal polity. Blair's federalism is, however, asymmetrical. While England has no government to represent its interests, Scotland has been given a parliament that will control domestic arrangements, safeguard the Scottish legal system, and have limited fiscal powers. The Welsh Assembly is a legislature in name alone, having been given few substantive powers. In Northern Ireland, the parliament will be able to maintain privileged and direct relations with the Republic of Ireland. For the same political reasons that led Blair to create the Scottish parliament, he has not challenged the overrepresentation of Scotland in the British Parliament, despite the fact that Scottish representation has been maintained since the nineteenth century in the teeth of demographic decline—to protect Scottish domestic priorities that are now further protected by the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh (Keating 1998, 198–99).

In "What's Wrong with Asymmetrical Government?" Michael Keating (1998) defends asymmetrical arrangements in Britain by arguing, simply enough, that such arrangements have existed for a long time because they accommodate asymmetries in identity and self-representation. Remarkably enough, he uses the example of Quebec to defend this society-centric view of asymmetry (Keating 1998, 196). But as our examples have amply demonstrated, asymmetries in identity and self-representation are very much a "dialogical process," one that is intimately tied to privileges and institutions secured by the state; they are not autochthonous by any stretch of the imagination. Though cultural collectivities certainly can precede their political articulation, politicized and institutionalized cultural collectivities do not.

The Dangers Posed by the Confounding State

Ultimately, the most powerful argument against the politicization and institutionalization of cultural collectivities is that it exacerbates human misery. In the People's Republic of China, the rise of state ethnicity has, to a certain extent, afforded a degree of protection for citizens. In democratic polities, however, it has often led to demagoguery, xenophobia, and other kinds of extremism. The ignorance of voters in all mass democracies, demonstrated time and again, leads many to make decisions in the absence of any information about the consequences of

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public policy choices and on the basis of arbitrary preferences (Friedman 1998). To speak of a collective democratic will is, in light of the empirical evidence of widespread public ignorance and, more importantly, its *systemic* causes, delusional, irresponsible, and dangerous. Divorced from the long-term and often invisible consequences of their actions, voters often support political programs that go against their interests.

These concerns have been raised in the past, having formed the basis of Plato's rejection of democracy (Somin 1998, 444.) Today, however, they are all the more relevant as the intimate sphere and cultural membership are increasingly the subject of often-destructive state power. Ironically enough, the institutionalization of ethnicity, even when it appears to undermine state cohesion, serves the state by masking serious political and class differences, differences in need, as cultural differences; in doing so, it allows the state to isolate and stigmatize stable enemies constructed out of whole cloth, often minorities, thus creating solidarity among members of the reimagined majority and inculcating allegiance.

Posing as a reform designed to enshrine cultural difference or innocuous efforts to facilitate the collection of statistics, the institutionalization of ethnicity has severely undermined the independence of the public sphere. By removing questions of culture from political deliberation, individual and collective efforts to secure cultural survival would still be possible; however, states would not be able to legislate outcomes or limit the choices of others through legal sanction. A disinterested state would presumably welcome the *de*politicization of cultural collectivities, but the confounding state is far from disinterested.

* * *

Mass democracy cannot prevent the state from pursuing its own ends because the informational burdens created by the state's social-scientific technologies prevents the mass public from engaging in effective surveillance—the modern state confounds attempts to control it. Contrary to the view of democratic identity theorists such as Taylor and Habermas, social groups, including those organized around ethnic affiliation that are believed to exist prior to and independent of state power, are as often as not an institutionalized effect of state power, used to facilitate various state functions, including the minimization of social discord and the extraction of resources. In moving from the principal strategy of

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premodern states—inspiring fear in the hearts of potential challengers—to securing allegiance from the governed by means of interventions that restructure the lifeworld, modern states paralyze societal elements that might otherwise aim to avoid domination by the state. When these interventions persuade people that their "identities" are at stake in ethnic politics, we see not a welcome expression of democratic self-rule, but a modern incarnation of the dangers of democracy—especially of democracy in which the people unwittingly play out the unanticipated consequences of policies enacted by largely autonomous states.

NOTE

1. The following account draws heavily on Brubaker 1996, 23–54.

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Earl C. Ravenal

IGNORANT ARMIES: THE STATE, THE PUBLIC, AND THE MAKING OF FOREIGN POLICY

ABSTRACT: *A state's foreign policy is constrained by parameters that inhere in the structure of the international system and in the nation's own political-constitutional, social, and economic systems. The latter, domestic parameters, include "public opinion." Because the public is largely ignorant of foreign affairs, policy-making elites have wide scope for acting more rationally than would otherwise be possible, although public opinion operates on the second-order effects of foreign policy (e.g., taxes, casualties)—inviting mismatches of objectives and means. The prevalent nonrational theories of foreign-policy derivation are themselves largely ignorant of the dominantly rational processes of the state, particularly in its foreign and military functions.*

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

—Matthew Arnold, *Dover Beach*, 1867

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I. PUBLIC OPINION AND FOREIGN POLICY

How one evaluates of the impact of public opinion on the state depends not only on observations of public opinion per se, but also on perceptions of the role of the professionals (mostly bureaucrats) who are in charge of this or that function of state. It will make some difference whether one thinks that these professionals proceed (1) seriously, deliberately, honestly, and competently, in a process that depends on aggregation and weighing—as I will later say, objectively and rationally—or (2) merely through bureaucratic infighting, surreptitious power-grabbing, or even venality. The latter views of policy making as subjective and nonrational animate the prevailing theoretical models. Whatever one's view of the state, however, certain state processes, such as foreign policy (where external factors are important) and especially military policy (where technical expertise is important), sit uneasily with the operation of "public opinion."

The analysis of public opinion is a well-developed area of political science, marked, in one dimension, by a division between theorists who see public "ignorance" as being so extreme that it entails a lack of structure or temporal stability in public opinion, and theorists who search for stability, sometimes structured by the "heuristic" influence of partisan identification and various symbols and character traits. In another dimension there is the question of whether public opinion has much of an impact on public policy.

For present purposes, the key issue—which links the questions of ignorance and impact—is *how* public opinion *operates*: At what points might public opinion be said to "enter" a dynamic model of the derivation of the state's foreign policy, and at what points does it affect the policy process? In this respect public ignorance has a somewhat contradictory—and practically frustrating—set of effects: (1) The function of making foreign policy is especially relegated to experts ("bureaucrats"), whose expertise legitimizes their autonomy—that is, autonomy from the pressures of public opinion. Yet (2) public ignorance of primary aspects of foreign and military policy (such as their costs), as well as ignorance of the essentially rational and objective nature of the bureaucratic process, focuses public opinion (mostly in a negative mode) on the "second-order" effects of foreign policies and defense programs, and tends to deny, in critical cases, the means to implement the programs and ultimately the policies rationally developed by bureaucrats.

It has been suggested (in these pages)[1] that the mass public's igno-

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rance precludes it from conveying useful policy guidance to policy-making elites, and may even preclude it from imposing effective policy constraints on them; and that this situation prevails regardless of such devices as polling to elicit expressions of public opinion. Here I will elaborate and restate that thesis, primarily so we can examine the bearing of public ignorance on foreign (and associated military) policy, study the more general question of how public opinion affects the derivation of a state's foreign policy, and draw some larger conclusions about the entire process by which the state makes foreign and military policy, and about the way that this process can be appropriately "modeled"—both descriptively and prescriptively.

A good deal of the contemporary literature on the formation of foreign policy has emanated from observers and analysts of the belief systems not only of the general public, but also of elites. There is a sort of standoff among the various observers about whether mass belief systems and elite belief systems substantially differ—a question that depends in large part, of course, on whether one views mass opinion as so ignorant as to be almost random, or at least unstable (the view of Gabriel Almond [1960] and Philip E. Converse [1964]), or perhaps just infinitely malleable; or as coherently and intelligibly structured (the position of such scholars as William R. Caspary [1970], Eugene Wittkopf [1990 and 1994], Ole Hosti [1992], and P. J. Powlick and A. Z. Katz [1998]—even if it is nonetheless "ignorant" [Friedman 1997 and 1998]). A related question is the extent to which foreign policy stances are conditioned by images of specific "enemies"—images that may have their origins in the enemies' objective actions, but that are, depending on the degree of mass and elite ignorance, subject to exaggeration, error, and manipulation. There is no doubt that the theorists of public and elite ideology—ideology being the chief heuristic used by the less-ignorant elites—are on to something, and that, even if the debate is unresolved, mass and elite opinion have real effects on the making of foreign policy. But the consuming interest in cognitive-moral factors (beliefs, values, preferences, ideologies, opinions, perceptual schemes and screens—in general, "constructivist" notions) as the ultimate and dominant independent variables in explaining state policy may lead to some incomplete and premature conceptions of how foreign policy is made.

In particular, I will be concerned with the extent to which public and elite perceptions of "threat" represent *objective* features of a real situation, and are therefore inescapable, or are escapable only by fools and only at some risk (as "Realist" scholars of international relations hold);

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or represent what I take the entire school of constructivists to mean when they say that, in some social, political, or moral way, such threats are "constructed"—that is, that such threats are "what we make of them,"[2] that they proceed from our self-generated "images," that these images are generic and related less to the apparent external phenomena themselves than to characteristics of our own cultural and psychological makeup, and that they constitute types of constraints that can, to various degrees, be "moved" by our understanding and by our supervening will, since supposedly external and immovable threats are actually projections of our own attitudes onto a more-or-less blank screen.

I will be less concerned with (even statistically accurate) "horizontal" or "vertical" correlations of one to another aspect of a belief system or a value system, than with the correct conceptualization of the entire derivation of a state's foreign policy, and the appropriate modeling of a comprehensive theory of the state in its international context. My metatheoretical persuasion is that partial explanatory insights, relationships, and correlations, in order to be understood, must be set in their "field"—not the narrow field of the study of the origin of opinions, but some appropriately larger field. Beyond that, it does no good to oversimplify the lines of foreign-policy formation, whether from constructivist or Realist motives.

The problem with belief-based, or value-based, explanations of policy formation is that they avoid the further question—the truly determinative question—of how (or, in a quasispatial model, "where") values and beliefs are represented in a more comprehensive model of the derivation of a state's foreign policy. Such a larger model inevitably emphasizes that making foreign policy is a *process*: a process at the state, or "unit," level; a complex process that contains sequential and transitive considerations and actions, sets of parameters (constraints) of various kinds and effects, and feedback loops; and above all, a *rational* process: one that exhibits, not perfect rationality, but recognizable rationality; yet also a "complex" rationality that is capable of encompassing, in some way, a variety of nonrational factors.

I take it as understood that the quality or condition of "ignorance" applies to the public's misapprehension of (or lack of any apprehension of) the empirical situation that envelops a potential set of state policy directions. (However, it is conceivable that, despite any degree to which the public is ignorant of the empirical realities germane to a potential set of state policy decisions, the public might harbor *prescriptively* constructive and useful opinions about the actual or contingent moves that

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the state should make. This situation could come about by coincidence; or it could occur through some kind of heuristic[3]—which could include a more general existing sentimental orientation or ideological fixation, or assent to the "leadership" of some political figure, or some explicit or indirect process of education.)

I myself would add a second possible dimension of policy ignorance: namely, misapprehension of the nature and workings of the *derivation of policy*. The way you think policy is made has more than a little to do with what you think about the appropriateness of that policy, and about the situation that surrounds it. In this regard, the public is systematically—albeit not, for the most part, deliberately—misinformed by academic theorists, journalistic analysts, and public officials; for the theorists, analysts, and policy makers themselves are in the grip of false models of the very policy process to which they devote, in various ways, their working lives.[4]

The essential aspects of foreign policy making, of which even practitioners, let alone theorists, seem unaware, or at least unappreciative, are its overall *rationality* and its respect for the influence of *parametric conditions* (which itself is a hallmark of rationality). These are the aspects that should be represented in a proper model of the derivation of a state's foreign policy, and especially its defense policy. Instead theorists depict foreign-policy planning as willful, as heedless of constraints, and as nonrational (especially in the sense of *sub*rational—e.g., characterized by "rent-seeking," pursuing shallow bureaucratic advantage, or optimizing the profits of a particular interest group or congeries of such groups—the "military-industrial complex").

Foreign-policy practitioners tend either to be (understandably) impressed by the bureaucratic features of government life, or to be (more typically) nearly atheoretical, disdaining even a first-level consistency by asserting that all decision making is "case by case," or by denying the intellectual constraints of an operational policy even as a set of "if-then" propositions that would contingently predict their own disposition to act.[5] Of course, Defense Department bureaucrats in particular are more keenly aware of at least several of the parameters that affect their operation: principally cost (of individual weapons systems, at least in the next fiscal year's authorizations); often the overall amount of money allocated to their own military service; and usually the "top-line" aggregate amount authorized for their entire department—say, "$310 billion." Usually, however, even they are *not* (as I have pointed out elsewhere)[6] aware of the "full-slice" costs of military components and activities,

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once support and overhead are accounted for. And while they do tend to be aware of the quantifiable capabilities of the weapons systems and types of forces required for various kinds of combat situations, at least into the 1970s the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted plans that were "fiscally unconstrained"; a then-recently retired Supreme Allied Commander Europe could not, within 50 percent, identify the amount of money that the United States was spending on the defense of NATO.[7] This relative ignorance of the essential parameter of cost extends down the line, of course, to lesser and more restricted levels of command and civilian responsibility. Only small pockets of Defense Department analysts, such as are found in the department of Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E) (formerly called "Systems Analysis"),[8] operating according to the methodology of "program budgeting," *could* cost out the elements of the U.S. defense program.

The Effect of Public Opinion

In providing part of an answer to the question of how the state's foreign policy (particularly its defense policy) is derived, I will focus on a misconception (an instance of "ignorance") on the part of publics, elites, and even theorists, about both the *way* that various influences enter the policy-formation process, and the structure and dynamics (the "model") of the process itself. This form of ignorance has two baneful effects. First, it distorts the actual shaping of foreign policy, because the public, and legislators, have been "taught" to impute to foreign-policy and defense-policy initiatives inaccurate motives and causal influences. Second, it corrupts the models that theorists of foreign policy entertain and promote; and this corrupting effect is abstracted and generalized into entire epistemological and even ontological stances toward the world.

To begin at the beginning, there is a trilogy of influences on public policy, including foreign policy:

1. *The public*, which can be segmented, somewhat arbitrarily, into the informed (perhaps the "attentive") public (which is influenced, in turn, by organized interest groups, and even by the efforts of government), including the journalistic establishment. Though many prominent defense correspondents are brilliant investigative reporters (real "beavers"), generally they are credulous and selective, mostly because they lack a

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theoretical framework within which, and through which, to evaluate the material that they receive.

2. *Interest groups*, which can be divided between those that are "outside" government and those (factions) that are inside government.

3. *Professionals*, virtually all "bureaucrats" inside the formal government departments, but perhaps also those hired by the government for specific or general projects. This category includes elected leaders and appointed cadres, mostly in the executive branch, but also members of the legislative branch, particularly its virtually permanent staff.

It would be fair to say that, of the three sources of influence on *foreign* policy, the professional echelon is the most apt to take into account external factors, such as the intentions of foreign states, new foreign threats, and adverse balances of power. Indeed, such foreign influences could be considered an independent fourth source of impact on a state's foreign policy. In the case of some states, even their own foreign policies are made under the corrupt influence, or the direct pressure, or even the effective control, of foreign sources.[9]

The range of questions that are asked about "public opinion" reflects whether we are talking about "elite images" (including elite misperceptions);[10] the "attentive" public (which is virtually the same as the "vocal" public, the public that finds its way into the mailbag of congressional representatives and thus is given disproportionate weight by legislators); the public as defined by the electoral process; the public as identified in public-opinion polls, to whatever extent these are technically proficient and accurate—a question not only of statistics but of interview strategy and questionnaire design (here might lie the largest source of substantive error, since it is, to various degrees, impossible to predict the entire future, the product of so many contingencies, that would confront the survey respondent). And any consideration of public opinion *should* reflect the fact that the public's attitudes might shift critically during the course of an action—say, a war—that the public might originally have supported.

The usual (Conversean) questions that have been posed *about* "public opinion" have to do with how, and to what extent, it is articulate (or blunt), univocal (or contradictory), stable (or fickle), sensible (or stupid), active (or inert and manipulable), engaged (or uninvolved). Those do not even reach some further questions, which are whether public opinion is powerful (or impotent), legitimate (or arbitrary and thus ignorable), and ignorant (or informed).[11] I would add that (what I would relabel) the "inefficacy" (rather than, or in addition to, the incompetence)

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of public opinion, especially in the area of foreign policy—that is, a combination of its invalidity, impotence, and illegitimacy—might stem, in part, from *the way in which foreign policy questions are framed and debated*, at least within the American polity (and, I suspect, elsewhere as well): that is, as alternative attractive *end-states*, rather than as more complex and operational *processes*. Contemporary examples (oversimplified, to be sure) would be:

Engagement with the world, versus isolationism.

Cooperation with other nations in multilateral enterprises aimed at protecting human rights and diminishing human suffering and deprivation, versus callous and selfish disregard.

Helping to safeguard the security of countries with congenial political systems against aggression, versus letting them fend for themselves in their own regions.

Devoting some of "our" national product and assets to promoting the economic development of disadvantaged nations, versus maximizing our own national welfare, probably at the expense of other nations.

Such examples could be multiplied. They assume that the mentioned action or remedy will be successful. They also tend to suppress the tangible requisites entailed by the actions or policies in question. Indeed, the fact that the very idea of entailments is missing from these statements indicates the absence from public debate of the factors that constitute the "logic" (and the logistics) of foreign policy, such as: the probable course of events without the contemplated action (a sort of baseline); the amount and kind of effect, and within what amount of time, that could be brought about by "our" action; the cost (in several dimensions) of "our" action;[12] and, of course, the array of alternative policies (each with its potential benefits and costs).

In other words, what is missing from foreign-policy debate (and especially military-policy debate), and from whatever might be the public's consideration of the issues, *and* from the models of theorists of international relations, are the complexities of the "problem situation" (including, notably, the existence, identity, and location of parameters of various kinds). Recognizing such complexities would give rise to a view of policy derivation as a process that has several stages; that is a result of deliberate—even rational—discussion among experts or professionals and institutions; and that is, moreover, a process that can, and typically does, create feedback and consequent policy change (from the initially favored policy). Instead, what we usually find, among international relations theorists, is what might be called the heuristic[13] of par-

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tial, simplistic (though often mathematically or statistically advanced) models, which portray a direct (associative or causal) arrow from certain expressions of values or preferences (including those held by the public) to certain foreign policies or actions of state. Thus, public-opinion theory (whether in the empirical form of depicting the impact of public opinion, or in the prescriptive form of advocating forms of governance that allow or enhance the role of public opinion) often takes its place among those pervasive policy models that posit "preferences" (typically at the collective-cognitive level but also at the individual-cognitive level) as the cause (or correlate)[14] of the foreign-policy actions and orientations of a state.

This is not to say that the topic of the *impact* of public opinion on public policy is not recognized, and addressed, by foreign-policy theorists. Indeed, in the prospectus for the year-2000 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association (1999, 674), the division devoted to "Public Opinion and Political Participation," chaired by John Hurwitz of the University of Pittsburgh, highlighted, as a key issue for discussion, "the linkage between public opinion and public policy, particularly studies examining the degree to which the mass public exerts influence over elite decisions." Another indication of political scientists' detailed attention to the operation of public opinion is a review article by Richard C. Eichenberg (1998), "Domestic Preferences and Foreign Policy: Cumulation and Confirmation in the Study of Public Opinion." Eichenberg reviews works on public opinion and foreign policy in the European Union (by Matthew J. Gabel), in the United States (by Ole R. Holsti), and in Germany (by Andrei S. Markovits and Simon Reich); and he remarks: "Unlike earlier work on linkage politics, which asked simply if domestic factors exerted any impact on external behavior, these newer works attempt to model specifically the impact of domestic preferences on discrete types of behavior, including defense budgeting . . . cooperation and conflict . . . and the 'two level' bargaining behavior of international actors."

My admittedly impressionistic survey of the overall direction of contemporary public-opinion theorizing suggests, however, that the *kinds* of "linkage" that are asserted in research devoted to this topic tend to be too simple, and, above all, too direct; and that this fault is the result, not so much of inadequately measuring public opinion in itself, but, rather, of overlooking the encompassing process by which foreign policy is derived.

To remedy this defect, the questions that are usually asked about

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public opinion—e.g., *Who* is the "public" (i.e., Who among the populace has consistent foreign-policy "attitudes"?)? What is the public *saying* about foreign policy? What does this expression of opinion *mean*? and How "legitimate" is public opinion as a factor that should be taken into consideration in the policy process?—should, in my estimation, yield to the more operational question of "where" and "how" public opinion enters the process of deriving foreign policy. In particular, How is public opinion reflected in (1) the "values" that shape the initial foreign policy stance of a state; (2) the share of national income devoted to defense; and (3) attitudinal constraints on the design of military missions (which could be abbreviated as "casualties") that form part of the parameter that one could characterize as the "sociology of war"?

"Locating" public opinion within the policy-making process also requires that we inquire into what might be considered the opposite of public opinion, namely the opinions and actions of foreign-policy "elites." What are these attitudes and activities, how are they institutionalized—that is, where are they "located" in the process—and, above all, how "rational" are they?

In other words, much of what we want to know about public opinion is not "operational" in itself; determining what is operational requires setting public opinion in a comprehensive model of the derivation of the state's foreign policy. The failure to do so can be found in some of the best studies in the literature. For example, research on the American public's attitudes toward "isolationism" and "casualties" tends (a) to take public opinion as a thing in itself, and (b) to take public "preferences" (and their sources), in turn, as virtually all that we need to know about the derivation of (American) foreign policy. In this sense, public opinion is a kind of surrogate for the "preferences" that are so much the object of interest, concern, and research among constructivist theorists of international relations. As a result, public-opinion research often shares the disabilities of constructivism, such as: positing direct and immediate effects of thought and expression (in "civil society") upon the policy outputs of "the state"; concentrating on entirely ideational, rather than substantial, causal factors in state policy; focusing entirely on the "impetus" side, to the neglect of the "constraint" side; becoming absorbed in expressions of cultural identity; and, further, taking raw expressions of identity as if they are final expressions of the institutionalized preferences of the entire national society. One might even say, therefore, that a reconceptualization of the role of public opinion could help to rescue public-opinion research from constructivism,

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by "putting public opinion in its place": that is, as one of many parts of the derivation of policies by (democratic) states. Having "brought the state back into" our understanding of (at least democratic) polities, we need to subsume the question of "what" a society's values are under the question of "how" the broader values held by, or among, the public of a given society are transmuted into the policy outputs and actions of the state.

The Specification of Ignorance

What this indicates is the need to go beyond public-opinion analysis as such, and move to a discussion of *where* public opinion "enters" a more comprehensive and articulated model of the derivation of a state's foreign policy. This discussion must describe the antipodal opposite of public opinion, namely the explicit deliberative process conducted by policy planners—in particular, the defense planning process, in which the foreign policy of the state is translated into its tangible, mostly military, requisites, and in which the resource consequences are "presented" to the nation's "political economy"; that is, the required budgetary costs and military personnel requirements become the subject of legislative action, and thus engage, to some extent, the attention, scrutiny, and criticism of the press and the public.

Public opinion enters the model where a nation's values originate; but these values *only in the first instance* inspire the *state's* "preference" for a certain role in the international system, and, further, this role is only a part of the nation's overall foreign policy "stance" (which is a combination of its role and its *situation*).

Public opinion also enters the model as a factor in the nation's "political economy"—that is, as one of a number of parameters or constraints on the political support and (mostly fiscal) resources needed to implement and sustain a particular foreign and military policy.

Public opinion also enters the model as another set of parameters or constraints, comprising the sociology of war (attitudes toward casualties, modes of warfare, and the treatment of other countries). The sociology of war combines with military technology (in which public opinion is barely a factor) to compose what might be called "the future of war," a set of parameters that can force the redesign of military missions, and even cause a change in the national strategy.

The public can also affect policy choices of state in two other, rather

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different, ways (which constitute, in my overall model, two supplementary accounts of the derivation of foreign and military policy): (a) by influencing perceived costs and cognized stakes, in a cost-benefit calculus that determines a state's "propensity to intervene"; and (b) by constituting several of the constraints (some political, some fiscal) that apply to the microeconomic ("linear program") process of allocating various blocks of resources to the different elements in the national society's total "objective function."

In this view, public opinion operates most effectively on second-order factors (such as the entailed costs and consequences of a state's policies); it operates dynamically, at various points in a state process; and it operates most characteristically on the constraint side. By contrast, the standard view of public opinion has it contributing directly to the formation of the state's "preferences"; and as constituting a *static* configuration (taken at any given time, in any given situation). Nowhere in the theoretical schemes of the established public-opinion analysts are explicit (and rational) state processes and real (objective) parameters (that apply to the foreign policy process) taken into account. Thus, both the "logic" and the "logistics" of foreign policy derivation are ignored.

Since, in my model, public opinion affects policy "existentially" (that is, in ways that are indirect yet substantive), it matters less (or, rather, it matters *in different ways*) whether this opinion, in itself, is ignorant and therefore unintelligible (e.g., Converse 1964) or "structured" and therefore meaningful (e.g., Wittkopf 1990). Though (I believe) primarily ignorant (of the relevant factors of the nation's situation, and of the way that foreign and, especially, military policy is derived), public opinion constitutes an effective constraint that must be—and ultimately *is*—taken rationally into account by the proximate "makers" of foreign and military policy. Even though public opinion sometimes (and sometimes at crucial junctures) nonrationally denies policy makers the necessary means to implement a publicly "preferred" policy (demanding "bricks without straw"), that, too, is part of the systemic logic, and therefore the more encompassing rationality, of the larger policy-making process.

Perhaps another, summary, way of putting it is this: Public opinion, seen as an aspect of "social construction," fails. Public opinion, seen as a set of parameters, "works," though often perversely.

So far, I have identified "public ignorance" primarily with the "mass" public, though ignorance also, to degrees and in certain respects, characterizes elites (including the practitioners of foreign and military policy)

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and theorists of political science (and even analysts of "public opinion"). And I have qualified "ignorance" to comprise, not only lack of specific knowledge of a country's situation in all its international circumstances, but also distorted notions of *how* a country's foreign and military policies are actually made (including the cost of elements of the defense program), and therefore *why* this policy is, or should be, what it is or what it is not. Since foreign policy is also constrained, even from the beginning, by the parameters of the international system (of states), and then is constrained further by other sets of parametric factors within the national system, it is subject to feedback and adjustment. Public opinion, then, has its principal (and sometimes crucial) impact on the second-order effects entailed by the state's foreign policy, such as the defense budget as it engages fiscal policy; the size of military forces as this affects conscription; and the nature of warfare as it shapes the design of military missions.

In a *theoretical* vein, this reconceptualization of public opinion (as well as a proper conceptualization of other factors) requires that public opinion be considered, not as an instance of how a nation generates its "preferences" and thereby "socially constructs" its world, but rather as a set of specific inputs (mostly parametric) into a larger, more comprehensive, more complex process of foreign-policy derivation—a process that is necessarily characterized as (a) rational (in its entirety) and (b) objective (in its recognition of the reality of sets of parametric factors).

There are two *practical* consequences of this conception of the operation of public opinion. One is the large scope that is accorded to expert professionals or bureaucrats, working within rather formal and well-defined concrete institutions and procedures, to shape a state's foreign and military policy, mostly by receiving (explicitly from political authorities, and amorphously from the entire political system) general directives and indications regarding the nation's foreign-policy "stance" or orientation toward the international system (its "role," in terms of its foreign-policy concerns, within the setting of its situation), and translating[15] these into their entailments, or "tangible requisites," in a rational and even quasideductive process that I call "the defense planning process" (consisting of a hierarchy of concerns from foreign policy, through national strategy, military missions, and forces-weapons-operational doctrines, to the resources of budgets and military personnel).

A second practical consequence is the large mismatch that occurs (often enough in a nation's history) between the foreign policy that is

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(initially) demanded by "public opinion" and a state's political structure, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, either constraints imposed on the way the state is to implement that foreign policy or constraints that are imposed on the resources necessary to implement that foreign policy.

The Role of Experts and the Logic of Systems

The role of "experts" or "professionals," or, if you wish, "bureaucrats," in the derivation of the state's foreign and military policy, bears directly upon the question posed by Theda Skocpol and other bringing-the-state-back-in theorists: How *autonomous* is the state—that is, how independent in its operation from "civil society"? One of the props of this autonomy, the expertise that is imputed to specialized bureaucrats, also raises the question, first, of the rationality and objectivity of the state's performance of its foreign and military policy function; and, further, of the rationality of the entire policy-derivation system.

This rationality is usually achieved piecemeal, and often grudgingly (especially in the notable historical cases of the loss of empire, or of subordination to the will and power of another state). But however much it proceeds by fits and starts, the rationality of the policy process is likely—given the public's essential ignorance of the objective requisites of projecting and sustaining a foreign policy, and of the true nature of the policy-formative processes of the state—to produce a comprehensive contradiction, a grand mismatch, between an electorate's preferences for a certain role in the world, or for certain general and specific outcomes, and the constraints incorporated in the operation of the system, including constraints imposed by the same electorate, or by various elements of "the public," on the tactics and resources available to achieve those preferred outcomes. For example, military intervention that is ostensibly desired by the public, according to competent survey researchers, may be denied by the public the necessary voluntary or conscripted personnel or the entailed tax revenues (or congressional budgetary allocations).

In this example, the rationality of the system both *consists in* its accommodation of constraint and is *frustrated by* the nonrationality of the constraint. This complex yet realistic account of the operation of the system contrasts with international-relations constructivism, which essentially posits the self-referential choice of policies (which is partially

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true, but at best a truism), but also the self-gratifying "choice"—indeed, invention—of the (otherwise external, and real) foreign-policy environment: the state and its situation are (in the constructivist construct) one, so there can be no mismatches; and public opinion creates its own realities, rather than, on occasion, its own inconsistencies.

A gauge of the defense professionals' expertise may be gained by first cataloguing the public's lack of it.

First, the public does not know how to cost anything, especially the building-block components of forces. Here, civilian critics, particularly those on the liberal-left—whose twin biases are to fixate on destructive weapons and to consider any notable defense spending as "obscene" or "bloated"—tend to talk about the unit costs of individual big-ticket weapons systems, or the lifetime cost of an important weapons system. But *forces* are the important components in a cost-evaluation of a country's defense program; that is, the design of military missions requires certain numbers and kinds of forces, and those forces must be appropriately equipped with weapons systems; the weapons systems do not "drive" the forces. (See Ravenal 2000a.) Defense costs what it costs. But you have to *know* what it costs, and you have to know *why* it costs what it does.

Second, the public does not know how to plan a military mission. This function includes setting the criteria of victory, which, in an age of increasing asymmetrical and informal and indirect warfare, are becoming elusive. Missions are the heart of the defense planning process. Planning missions involves the particular force requisites, the logistics, and the time-lines of deployment. Of course, determining the criteria of "victory"—and thus when, and whether, to get out—is partly the province of political leaders; to the extent that they, too, are autonomous from public opinion (except as a partial constraint), they can be counted as members of the state.

Third, since the public does not know how to determine, and to design for, the mission requirements of weapons systems needed by the forces that will carry out missions, it cannot judge the probable outcomes of combat situations, at any level of combat.

Fourth, the public does not know how to integrate technology into next-generation weapons systems.

Fifth, the public does not know how to judge—and meet—the criteria of readiness. For instance, civilian critics, who often make proposals to "depend more on" the military reserves (which are ostensibly cheaper), have no basis for this recommendation.

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Sixth, the public does not have a grasp of the obsolescence of weapons systems and "platforms." Thus it cannot judge whether to stretch out a system's life or replace it.

Seventh, the public does not have a "feel" for the morale and the ethos of fighting forces. Consequently, it cannot judge where to draw the line on the micromanagement of defense programs by legislators.

Conversely to all these disabilities of the public, the peculiar expertise of the military service staffs and the Joint Staff resides precisely in those "middle" reaches of the planning process that implement foreign policy and national strategy:

First, they contribute judgments of the comparative efficacies of alternative national strategies in the pursuit of given foreign-policy objectives; this includes assessing the risks to overall national security of alternative national strategies, including gross comparisons of, say, ground-force intervention versus "strike warfare."

Second, they derive military missions (regional, functional) from national strategy; this includes assessing threats and evaluating the contribution of allies.

Third, they design military missions, including force requirements, weapons systems (with their "mission requirements"), and operational doctrines. In this function, the military takes cognizance of the parameters of the sociology of war and military technology.

Fourth, they derive forces, weapons systems, and operational doctrines from the planned missions. (Admittedly, some deference is paid to the organizational requirements, real and idealized, of the individual military services, and sometimes branches of those services).

Fifth, when it comes to costs of forces and, particularly, weapons, in terms of money and personnel, the military can influence techniques of acquisition and recruitment. But, to a large extent, forces and weapons "cost what they cost"; these cost factors are virtually parametric, though eventually subject to the (sometimes expensive) deliberate parametric shifts of investment in technology, and changes in the organization of defense industry.[16]

These elements of expertise not only constitute the professionalism of the cohort of decision makers and planners in a particular reach of the processes of a state; they also, to a significant degree, validate the autonomy and immunity from popular politics of the process, conferring a certain legitimacy upon it. Of greater importance to the topic of this paper, they serve as indicators of the essential rationality of the process.

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Non-Rational Theories of Foreign Policy

The theories, or models, that I characterize as "nonrational" constitute challenges to the ascription of rationality in the state-level making of foreign and military policy of the sort that I have set out thus far.

Most of such nonrational theories or models decompose—and thus make unintelligible—the very concept of "state" action. One category of nonrational theory, which I call "*sub*rational," is a set of quasitheoretical versions of virtually anecdotal accounts of the operation of self-interest within the processes of government, to the effect that supposedly "national" officials are really perpetrating suboptimal outcomes, for the sake of themselves.

There are several variants. One is the "organizational politics" model (described, not favored, by Graham Allison [1971 and 1999]),[17] wherein organizations favor their own entrenched methodologies ("standard operating procedures"), and, when confronted with a problem, scan only as far as the nearest convenient solution (Herbert Simon's "satisficing"), instead of seeking to optimize the interest of the state. Thus, one can predict that the organization's behavior at time t will be more or less the same as that at time t-1.[18]

Perhaps the most familiar of the subrational models is "bureaucratic politics" (Allison's "Model Three," the one that he espouses), wherein participants in the decision-making process seek to maximize their own personal or narrowly drawn organizational advantage, with only minimal respect (in the form of "shared values") for the "national interest" (and then only as an outside constraint on their dominantly self-serving behavior).

A surprising variant of bureaucratic politics is comprised in the ostensibly economic theory of "public choice," as in the work of James Buchanan (e.g., 1979 and 1980) and Robert Higgs (1987)—surprising because it is the analytic vehicle mostly of conservatives (whereas the bureaucratic-politics model represents predominantly liberal sentiment). Actually, "public choice" is not really economics, but is more a theory of politics. More to the point, it is not even about "public" choice, since, like the bureaucratic-politics model, it repudiates the very notion that bureaucrats make truly "public" choices; rather, they exhibit typically "rent-seeking" behavior, abusing their public positions in order to amass private gains, or at least to build personal empires within their official niches.

Perhaps the most prevalent of the subrational models is the "military-

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industrial complex," which grew out of propositions first put forward by C. Wright Mills in the 1950s.[19] This theory asserts that virtually all ostensibly national-security decisions—whether about strategy, the level of defense spending, the design of weapons systems, or the award of defense production and development contracts—are really, fundamentally, "pork," to serve a corporation, a locality, a particular military service, or an interest group within that service (such as naval aviators). The Pentagon, and the country, get, not the objectively appropriate measures or equipment, but rather what the "complex" foists upon them.

Subrational theories actually explain very little. Of course, there has to be *some* truth to them, in that they describe the behavior of some people, at some times, in some circumstances, under some conditions of incentive and motivation. But the factors that they posit operate mostly *as constraints* on the otherwise rational optimization of objectives that, if for no other reason than the playing out of official *roles*, transcend merely personal or parochial imperatives.

My treatment of "role" differs from that of the bureaucratic-politics theorists, whose model of the derivation of foreign policy depends heavily, and acknowledgedly, on a narrow and specific identification of the role playing of organizationally situated individuals in a partly conflictual "pulling and hauling" process that "results in" some policy outcome. Even then, it has been pointed out—for instance, in Houghton 2000 (particularly on pp. 167 and 171)—that historical *evidence, including* examples claimed by Allison himself to validate the bureaucratic-politics thesis, does not support that thesis. Indeed, in the second edition of *Essence of Decision* (1999), Allison and Zelikow themselves admit: "Some players are not able to articulate [sic] the governmental politics game because their conception of their job does not legitimate such activity" (311). This is a crucial admission, and one that points, empirically, to my own, broader and generic, treatment of role.

Why Bureaucrats Tend to Behave Themselves

Roles (all theorists state) give rise to "expectations" of performance. My point is that virtually all governmental roles, and especially national-security roles, and particularly the roles of the uniformed military, embody expectations of devotion to the "national interest," to rationality in the derivation of policy at every functional level, and to objectivity in the treatment of parameters, especially external parame-

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ters such as threats and the power and capabilities of other nations. Evidence of such generically loyal, rational, and objective behavior of (at least) national-security elites is pervasive—indeed, so pervasive that it would be otiose, and certainly inefficient, to present a panoply of case studies to illustrate this point (a point that is, of course, crucial to the argument of my paper). To be sure, ample allowance must be made for the partial, or occasional, influence of such nonrational factors as bureaucratic politics (and, for that matter, individual cognitive dispositions)—and a comprehensive and "complex rational" model would make such allowance, in ways and in places that are appropriate to the degree and the "location" of such nonrational factors (such as the influence of casualty-aversion on the design of military missions, or the "filters" of probability discounting, remoteness perception, and risk-aversion/acceptance on the state's "propensity to intervene." (See Ravenal 2000c.) Empirical demonstrations of the dominant rationality of both the conduct of governmental elites and the "total system" can be found in each annual Secretary of Defense's "Posture Statement," as well as in many accounts of defense decision making, such as Enthoven and Smith 1971. If one is "counting" single "cases" that support the thesis of rational policy making, it should be noted that *each* of the hundreds of items presented in these official reports and secondary studies constitutes a case of empirical evidence.[20]

Subrational models fail to take into account the possibility of bureaucrats' dedication to the "national interest," or the possibility that the national interest is honestly misconceived in more parochial terms. Moreover, subrational theories cannot factor in such obvious and essential aspects of the real world as the international system and, more specifically, threats and challenges emanating from outside one's own country.

In a way, "role" connects the individual to the state-level process, and moderates his (perhaps otherwise) self-seeking impulses, when he is constrained by his formal and official position. Role-derived behavior tends to be formalized and codified; relatively transparent and at least peer-reviewed; stable and consistent with others' expectations; longer-lived than any particular individual and transmitted to successors and ancillaries; measured against a standard, and thus corrigible; defined in terms of the performed function, and therefore derived from a state function; *un*corrupt, because personal cheating and egregious aggrandizement are conspicuously discouraged; and therefore likely to be rational, especially over time; and at least deliberate, not random.[21]

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Thus, we find defense decision makers attempting to "frame" the structure of a problem on the basis of the most accurate intelligence. For example, they seek to know "what *drives* what," and they perform "sensitivity analysis" to see how the results are moved by various hypothetical actions. They naturally want to know whether dependent variables are directly or inversely proportional to independent variables. They make it their business to know *where* the threats come from (i.e., threats are not "socially constructed").

A major reason for the rationality of this process is that much security planning is done, not in vaguely undefined circumstances that offer scope for idiosyncratic, subjective behavior, but rather in structured and reviewed organizational frameworks. This does not lead to the widely accepted psychodynamic hypothesis of "groupthink" (Janis 1982), but rather to an insistence that proposals be rationally presented. Nonrationalities (which are bad for understanding and prediction) tend to get filtered out. People are fired for presenting skewed analysis and for making bad predictions. This is because something important is riding on the causal analysis and the contingent prediction.

To those who have participated in processes of defense decision making, nonrational (including subrational) theories do not have the "feel" of reality. Given the roles that participants in the process are expected to play, obvious, and even not-so-obvious, "rent-seeking" would not only be shameful; it would present a severe risk of career termination. Therefore, ironically, even efforts to conceal such self-seeking, through the construction of objectively convincing advocacy arguments (so-called "rationalizations"), lead to an improvement in the quality of the debate.

At a more primal level, it is unclear why people predisposed to seek rents would choose to enter the foreign service or the defense bureaucracy, since the opportunities for personal profit there are minuscule compared to those in the commercial world. The very self-placement in these reaches of government testifies either to a sincere commitment to national values or to a lack of imagination sufficient to exploit opportunities for personal profit—which suggests that rent-seeking would no more characterize such bureaucrats once they were in a position to make policy than when they chose to enter public service in the first place.

A final point is that the truly important policy decisions—"large-scale foreign policy change" (see Ravenal 1989), or acute crisis action—are, and must be, observably rational in their overall design and purpose.

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They must be, because they produce testable results: States lose and fail. Leaders are voted or forced out of office.[22]

Nonetheless, it should go without saying that what we observe in the foreign-policy process is not pure rationality, but "bounded" rationality. Most theorists[23] define "bounded rationality" (and anything short of pure rationality) as *non*rationality. But this seems to me to be over-rigorous, to the point of being misleading. According to so rigorous a definition of rationality, it would be virtually impossible to find a case of it in reality. To me, bounded rationality (unless, of course, multiply bounded to the point of nullification) means seeking objectives in a recognizably efficient way, and having, as an overall objective, the optimization of some quality or entity. "Boundedness" itself, then, must be interpreted to mean observant of some constraints that are not *themselves* "rational" (though they need not be flagrantly irrational; they may just "be," existentially, neutral). Heeding such nonrational constraints does not make one's entire set of operating principles, taken as a whole, "nonrational"; one is simply seeking to achieve the maximization of one's "objective function" in the most efficient way, *subject to* nonrational parameters—that is, "facts."

II. THE RATIONALITY OF SEMI-AUTONOMOUS MILITARY POLICY

Most journalistic critics of defense (and surprisingly many academic critics, too) work on the level of metaphor and crude numerology. Actually, their critical dispositions constitute a kind of prototheoretical stance, one that almost invariably takes policy to be the result of some nonrational compulsion, attitude, or parochial self-interest.

Typical of this critical slant is what I call the "Ben and Jerry's" analysis, after some remarks by the chief executive officer of the ice-cream company at a meeting of sympathetic businessmen who call themselves "Business Leaders for New Priorities." At this meeting Ben Cohen offered his special flavor, "Totally Nuts," as a metaphor for the U.S. defense program. ("Who will have the first bowl?" Ben screamed; *Washington Post* 1996.)[24] To these critics, current U.S. defense budgets look unreasonably large, because, say, "the U.S. and its strong military allies are responsible for some 80 percent of total world military spending today"; or because "in 1996, America will spend more than twice as much on its military as the combined total of potential adversaries

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China, Russia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, North Korea, Cuba, and Libya" (Center for Defense Information 1996).[25]

Such comparisons are worthless and even misleading. First of all, no other country would fight the United States on U.S. terms; other countries, and groups, will fight "asymmetrically," taking advantage of their peculiar strengths and advantages. Second, each other country would be defending on its own ground, imposing disproportionate logistical and rotational demands on U.S. intruders, as well as force-on-force disparities. Third, the United States must fight with outsize, as well as apparently oversophisticated, forces and weapons; "the American way of war" has deep sociological roots and will not be displaced. Thus, *if* it is to fight with other states at all—particularly if there are several states that it might have to oppose simultaneously—the United States must maintain large and expensive standing military forces and deployment capabilities.[26]

What such comparisons overlook is the logic in the derivation of defense policy, the recognizable rationality in the almost deductive procession of reasoning from one to another of the levels of the hierarchy of concerns (from foreign policy, to national strategy, to military missions, to forces-weapons-doctrines, to the resources of money and military personnel). This logic is accurately—you might say empirically—reflected in the series of annual "posture statements" of successive Secretaries of Defense. Contrary to the persistent sniping from uninformed sources, these reports are characterized by intelligence (in the solutions and adaptations), openness (in the layout of facts and considerations), clarity (in expression), and rationality (in adjusting means to ends). The emphasis is on: (1) what things cost; (2) the missions of U.S. forces (in terms of battlefields and tasks, capabilities and functions); and (3) the mission requirements for U.S. weapons systems. The Secretary's report provides (if one looks, and sometimes digs, for it) "connectivity" between these three concerns and the higher levels of policy that shape them. These linkages not only facilitate the Secretary's own argument, but also allow for objective criticism and the positing of alternatives.

Such documents, then, are rational responses to the military *missions* that are generated by the higher levels of policy: national strategy and foreign policy. Note that only when one reaches the level of "military missions" does one encounter a level of policy that is "95 percent" the province of military planners. National strategy (the next higher level) could plausibly be considered a 50–50 split between White House/State Department and Pentagon determination. The highest level, foreign

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policy, is recognized to be almost entirely the province of the White House and the State Department.

Of course, to some extent the Pentagon must intuit the tangible significance of such foreign-policy guidance as it receives, which is entirely verbal and is also often obscure and even partially self-contradictory. But that does not mean that foreign-policy pronouncements are merely rhetorical, or (as in the frequent idle complaint) that, in the absence of some succinct phrase or designation of "doctrine," an administration "has no foreign policy." First of all, in the "operational" sense, foreign policy is a *prediction* of a state's contingent responses over a range of future situations; thus, a state will always have a foreign policy, whether or not anyone affects to notice it. And second, it is the function of the state's external security organizations, particularly its military organizations, to "operationalize" foreign policy. Thus, for example, the cost of America's foreign policy is not its roughly $23-billion "international affairs" budget, but rather that plus its roughly $310-billion defense budget.

Somewhat more systematically, the point here is this: Gross, static comparisons of overall U.S. forces, or defense budgets, with those of other countries (whether all, or just adversaries or potential adversaries) might be interesting; but they are not relevant to forming a military posture and defense program for the United States. A defense program (the strategy, the forces, the weapons) must meet necessary, or probable, *military missions*. Military missions are the pivotal element in the defense planning process—in designing the force structure and the major weapons systems (and the operational doctrines).

The hierarchy of concerns of which at least the U.S. defense-planning process consists, starting with foreign policy and proceeding through national strategy, to military missions, to forces-weapons-doctrines, to the resource-requisite level of money and military personnel (which is constrained by the nation's political economy), is so rational (though, of course, interwoven with some nonrational human and organizational impulses and behavioral characteristics; yet, within the "inner loop" of the planning process, these are far from dominant) as to be virtually *deductive* (with feedback if initial goals cannot be met or sustained).[27] Military missions are derived from "higher" levels of policy, notably national strategy and ultimately foreign policy: the "stance" of the state, as a combination of its role, in terms of the objects of its foreign policy, and its situation in the international system.

Thus, perhaps even more misleading than demotic journalism are the

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academic theories that attribute the defense program (aggregate spending, what is bought, what it is to be used for) to organizational momentum, bureaucratic aggrandizement, corporate greed, perceptual panic, and other nonrational independent variables. These explanatory models, in all their diversity, not only ascribe the foreign-policy outputs of the state to nonrational causes, but also, in positing a *direct* relationship between such causes and those policies, bypass the causal function of the entire process, the defense planning process, that translates initial policy orientations or even proposals or intentions into their tangible requisites, and thus provides a point of entry to several kinds of constraints (among them, those that arise from public opinion), while also providing linkages between foreign policy and its resource requirements, and between the structure of the international system and the domestic political economy. The various nonrational theories cut these linkages, thereby (in my view) rendering foreign and military policy both unintelligible and incorrigible; such theories suggest that, since there is "no reason" for what a state is now doing, it can make, with impunity, arbitrary cuts in, and transfers from, the defense budget.

Of course, in defense planning, as in any human enterprise, there is some distortion of cause and effect, but, in a comprehensive, complex rational model (such as the one that I am putting forward here), that constitutes the "noise," not the signal. And how do we know that this model resembles (at least U.S.) reality? Because it is consistent with the observed behavior of real-world defense bureaucrats; and with the case made annually by the reports of the Secretary of Defense; and with the description of the defense-planning process given in Enthoven and Smith 1971, which itself is a compendium of dozens of individual empirical case studies of how rational analysis—to be precise, "systems analysis"—is brought to bear on the generation of forces and weapons systems and even operational doctrines. I could also cite virtually every case that I personally observed, in my experience as a participant in the defense planning process (as a division director in the department of Systems Analysis, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, from 1967 to 1969).

Once one cuts through the noise, the signal is a set of propositions, which go in both directions: (1) To achieve effects of national strategy and foreign policy, a state must pay for what it gets, more or less at the going rates. And (2) if a state tries to save considerable amounts from the defense budget, it will have to slight some elements of its national strategy, and thus give up some objects of its foreign policy. This is because

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projected—that is, contingent—military missions drive the need for quantities and types of forces and weapons, and for the operational doctrines to use those forces and weapons, in various regions, against various adversaries, to various effects. And those military missions are not things unto themselves, but rather proceed from the national strategy and foreign policy—the "stance" that the state assumes toward the rest of the international system. But that stance is not merely a wishful reflection of a society's "values," fueling those stupefying great debates about (for example) America's role in the world; they are, rather, the balanced result of the role *and the situation* of the state, in the midst of the actual and impending configuration of power in the international system. And all this, finally, is tempered and constrained by the tangible and intangible support that a society's "political economy" will provide for the generation of the real, hard military requisites of its state's foreign policy.

What I have laid out here is an expression of the *logic* of defense policy, almost a theory of the derivation of military missions, perhaps a clue to the "operationalization" of foreign policy. When certain "specifications" of the actual situation of a state are added to the model, it will indicate whether a state will try to accomplish certain objectives in the world, and then whether the state will succeed or fail.

Constraints on State Power, Invisible and Logical

Earlier, I defined public ignorance as having two components: (1) negligence of the factors and circumstances (including costs)—the logic of the situation—that pertain to a society's military security; and (2) a distorted view, to the extent that it is a view at all, of the way that foreign and military policy are made—their applied logic, if you will.

The first form of ignorance, which might be compared to blindness, tends to relegate security planning to the province of official and professional elites, who are likely to be much more informed and competent—much less blind—than the public; and who are also likely to be dedicated to performing an objective and rational process in the interest of the state, characteristically transcending their own personal or parochial utility. On the other hand, blind ignorance also shifts the attention (and often the opposition) of the public to the "second-order" effects of the state's foreign and military policies, such as casualties (actual or projected), high defense budgets and significant taxation, and

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possibly conscription— thereby constraining in several ways the otherwise-autonomous decisions of the policy-making elites.

The second form of ignorance, which might be compared to a pair of spectacles that distorts sight, tends to slight the factors that actually influence the making of defense programs. This tends to cut any perceived linkage between the public's own (initially and overtly) "preferred" foreign policies and the means that are entailed to implement these policies, so that the constraints on second-order effects such as defense budgets and casualties—which actually must affect the generation of forces and the acquisition of weapons systems, and sometimes the fashioning of operational doctrines—are not seen to provide any feedback to help adjust foreign policy and military strategy.

These facets of public ignorance have the combined effect of handing the nation's policy elites ambitious goals in the world but denying them the means to implement these goals. This is the ultimate mismatch of ends and means, and it is also why simplistic theoretical explanations, which trace a direct line from initial, overt societal "preferences," however these are held to be generated in various theories, to the state's foreign policy outputs, are deficient and even mischievous. In effect, the public is unwittingly requiring its leaders (in the Biblical image) "to make bricks without straw."

Americans—and, I suppose, the citizens of any country that is enough of a power that its actions have consequences in the world, making its foreign policies worth studying and analyzing—learn late that foreign policies have entailments. They tend to think (to the extent that they pay the matter any mind) that their nation's role in the world, its choice of "objects" of concern and, particularly, intervention, can be the pure expressions of its "values" and sentiments; that foreign policies can be debated, and compared, in terms of the attractiveness of their putative end-states ("engagement" vs. "isolation"), because any of the putative entailments (costs, risks) can be manipulated or postponed or entirely avoided, as they are disconnected from the policies themselves and their intended ends. All of these "beliefs" (which are almost always implicit) produce a series of political actions—vetoes, protests, refusals, withdrawals of support, rebellions against such imposed costs as taxes and restrictions—by which the public responds (remotely, indirectly, eventually) to the entailed costs and risks that are the tangible requisites of given policies. In this disconnect—between endorsement of the goals of policy, and resistance to its entailments—lies the great "mismatch" of American foreign policy.

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The bottom line of this is that, even when there is a public opinion toward a particular foreign policy, that policy is not made by the public. Rather, mostly by means of two parameters—the constraints of a country's "sociology of war" and of its "political economy"—public resistance, say, to a significant foreign-policy engagement or military initiative (or, rather, to the second-order effects of such a policy) may force the governing leaders and planners to work around those parameters (or even force a change in those leaders or planners), not necessarily in the most efficient way, and sometimes, ironically, to the regret of the public, which "willed" the end (say, victory over communism) without the means (say, military effort).

The history of the ongoing standoff with Saddam Hussein of Iraq illustrates one such mismatch. On the one hand, the public was induced to oppose his continued reign, especially when it was persuaded that he threatened "us" or our "friends"—particularly with weapons of mass destruction. On the other hand, there were, at least before September 11, 2001, many indications that the American public would not support actions necessary to end the threat (such as full-scale ground-force intervention and lengthy occupation), and that therefore the American state was constrained from taking such actions.

Thus, the American public often prefers (at the affective-rhetorical level) commitments to defend "sympathetic" countries and polities around the world (and there is a large supply of these), but (on the level where causality and entailment reign) it would reject the defense-military costs and sacrifices that are objectively required for such foreign-policy commitments. This is partly because the public does not understand those risks and costs and sacrifices, and partly because many opinion leaders purvey misleading and false explanatory models that suggest the possibility of getting something for nothing: a "leaner, meaner" military; "reliance on diplomacy rather than military force"; "collective security"; the influence of America's "soft power."[28]

III. BRINGING THE STATE BACK INTO FOREIGN POLICY

In comparative politics, where "state theory" per se originated, the state should never have dropped out (and never really did drop out), since this subfield of political science is *about* the state (and other phenomena on the same "level" as the state). State theory seems to have been a reaction against comparativists' tendency to focus on the *components*, or

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constituents, of the state, or on "society" (and components of society) as distinct from the state (as the more formal apparatus), in order to establish independent variables that either might be revealing explanations of the (nominal) outputs or character of a state, or might be, simply, interesting subjects of study in themselves.

In comparative politics, "bringing the state back in" means raising the "level" of observation and description to a higher, and more "formal," plane. Contrastingly, in the study of international relations, "bringing the state back in" has meant lowering the level of observation and description, from the macro-systemic level that has been emphasized by such (structural) Realists as Kenneth Waltz (e.g., 1979). Such Realists contend that the underlying anarchy of the international system is virtually the sole necessary condition of any state's foreign policy, as well as being a sufficient condition to bring about the "appropriate" (and essentially unchanging) foreign policy of a state. In its drive for extreme explanatory parsimony, structural Realism fixates on one element (which some might take as an independent variable, and others as a set of parameters) that is held to be determinative; yet that element is often treated only as bluntly associative, not even "causal" in a fully articulated way, probably because the detailed, proximate causation of a state's foreign policy lies on the "unit level" (in Waltz's terminology), which structural Realist theory deliberately avoids. Thus, "bringing the state back in" really means specifying *how* the "international system" exerts its effects.

A continually burgeoning literature purports to address the linkage—the "pathways" (of "diffusion")—by which "international norms" become embedded and accepted as legitimate (that is, what is called "salient") in domestic state politics and wider social "discourse" and action.[29] However, virtually all of this literature treats the construction of international regimes and value systems, and states' accession to international regimes and value systems, as a function of domestic norms. Some analysts see somehow already-popular norms as altering state and societal institutions and thereby becoming "embedded." Other analysts see state and societal institutions as, in effect, "choosing" the norms that then become embedded. But, in either case, the predominant research in "norm diffusion" (as that title suggests) begins and ends with "norms" and (state) "preferences" (which are a kind of transmuted norms); though it purports to "link" phenomena at the international and state levels, the linkage remains on the subjective dimension. It overlooks real state processes, such as an articulated, institutionalized

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"defense planning process" that deals with objective "threats," whether specific or generic, to the state's situation in the international system, and that deals with objective constraints, such as a society's political economy.[30] Moreover, the "process" that norm-diffusion research does identify as the mechanism by which the initially existent international norm becomes a part of the state's "preferences" (which, as I have said above, are merely transmuted norms, reflected outwards toward the international system) is usually described *statically*, as a mere "intervening" variable. In other words, the predominant research (which is sometimes described as a movement to "bring the state back in") is an exercise in deriving the "*salience*" of this or that norm, not in either (a) seeing how such a norm plays against the (structural) realities of the international system, or (b) seeing whether such a norm even survives the "process" of its translation into its tangible requisites, which are, in turn, played against the constraints of a country's "political economy."

In an oblique, yet recognizable, sense, then, the entire exercise in the "diffusion of norms"—even taking cognizance of the depth of research and mid-level theory-building involved, and of the diversity of theoretical orientations of the scholars concerned with this topic (some explicitly constructivist, some liberal-institutionalist)—is a species of social constructivism: and arguably, therefore, an *overreaction* to structural Realism.

This may also be the place for a brief discussion of two other theoretical notions that are often invoked in treatments of the diffusion of norms. One is "path dependence," which asserts the determinative, and usually unique, influence of a country's history—both its prior experiences and its evolving values and institutions—upon its domestic and foreign policy.[31] Without objecting to this approach, I would remark only that a sufficiently *under*specified comprehensive theoretical framework (such as the one that I offer here) can accommodate the *various* values and institutions that are produced in the various path dependencies of different countries.

The other idea is "process tracing." This technique is designed to supplement, and underpin, the mere correlation of two (or more) variables—say, across geographical space (or even across different times arrayed in a nontemporal format, such as a regression)—by demonstrating the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable over time: for instance, by observing the conditions that, at various successive periods, shaped the emergence and evolution of some particular institution. Unfortunately (in my view), the term

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"process tracing" is slightly misleading. The establishment of a temporal sequence of relationships might indicate causation of a sort, and that is useful. But such a sequence is not a process in the immediate and usual sense of the word, in which institutionalized procedures take a given policy objective and translate it into its tangible requisites, and calculate its actual costs, and play these costs against constraints such as the political economy.

Theda Skocpol (1985) is generally credited with having led the movement to "bring the state back in." That description is commonly, and cursorily, taken to mean "the state" as "an autonomous actor," though Skocpol herself takes care to define "autonomy" as the degree to which "governmental institutions and administrative and military institutions [are] sites of independent action, of independent interest articulation, interacting with social movements and classes." Therefore, in her view, states are (only) "potentially autonomous actors," *not* "invariably autonomous" (since "sometimes, in fact, states [or parts of states] are captured by classes or social or interest groups") (1999, 17).

Skocpol (1985, 9) elaborates that "states conceived as organizations claiming control over territories and people may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society. This is what is usually meant by 'state autonomy.'" Expressing her essentially institutionalist, rather that ideational, conception of state autonomy, she argues that "states matter not simply because of the goal-oriented activities of state officials. They matter because their organizational configurations, along with their overall patterns of activity, affect political culture, encourage some kinds of group formations and collective political actions (but not others), and make possible the raising of certain political issues (but not others)" (ibid., 21). Skocpol (1999, 17 and 1985, 8) also invokes "path dependencies" as partial explanatory variables to account for the evolution and the present identity of a given state's policy goals and patterns of action. In sum, Skocpol (1985, 4, 20) intends her emphasis on the formal state as an explicit corrective—albeit not a substitute—for what she has characterized as "society-centered" explanatory models of state action.

Skocpol happens not to cite military policy and action (or even the broader category of security issues) as a *leading* example of state autonomy, but she does note that "states necessarily stand at the intersections between domestic socio-political orders and the transnational relations within which they must maneuver for survival and advantage in relation to other states." But, rather than settling for a single model of a generic

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"state" lodged within the structure of an international system (as in structural Realism), Skocpol emphasizes "the various ways in which state structures and actions are conditioned by historically changing transnational contexts" (1985, 8). She goes as far as to attribute state autonomy significantly to "the linkage of states into transnational structures and into international flows of communication," noting that "collectivities of career officials relatively insulated from ties to currently dominant socioeconomic interests are likely to launch distinctive new state strategies in times of crisis," folding such initiatives into the more generic "need of states to maintain control and order" (ibid., 9).

In this formulation, Skocpol does not refer to the ongoing functions of making security strategy and making defense programs and budgets. My view is that these functions exhibit relatively autonomous state behavior at its peak. She is guardedly complimentary of Stephen Krasner's state-elite account (Krasner 1978) of the formulation of at least one area of foreign policy—namely, the supply of raw materials from abroad—which cites "the high degree of insulation" of the White House and the State Department—"for U.S. foreign policy the central state actors"—"from specific societal pressures." "A set of formal and informal obligations," according to Krasner (1978, 11), "charge" these actors "with furthering the nation's general interests." As Skocpol herself puts it, this insulation of the state from society has tended to occur "precisely when distinctively geopolitical issues of foreign military intervention and broad ideological conceptions of U.S. world hegemony have been involved" (1985, 13).

Krasner's account correlates raw-materials policy making with the active and explicit determinative influence of political and professional elites; this could be seen as indicative of a larger theory of foreign-policy making as relatively expert and dominantly rational (though such an account would have to be more revealing of the *process* that generated the state's foreign and security policy). Similarly, Samuel DeCanio (2000) points out that state interests are implemented characteristically in cases where the state is defending its territory and integrity, and where the state is exacting the requisite resources from "its" society—attributing the state of affairs to the *interaction* of a high degree of state competence in these areas *and* an especially severe public ignorance: "The focus of state theory has been to attribute this autonomy to the . . . degree of control it has over the policy and military organs of the state. . . . State theory is focused on explaining the variables responsible for

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state autonomy that are *not* [emphasis added] connected with civil society. Hence the focus on military and taxation capabilities."

Skocpol, Krasner, and DeCanio develop and apply state theory in the field of comparative politics. In the field of international relations, the state has never been absent. The principal reason for the recent fielding of state-level approaches to the derivation of foreign policy—norm diffusion, path dependence, and process tracing—was the resuscitation of Realism, in the shape of "structural Realism" (or neo-realism), which, typically in Waltz's uncompromisingly parsimonious scheme, attributed all the (important or distinguishable) foreign policies and actions of a state directly to the structure—or, in an even more stringent interpretation, to the axiomatic "anarchy"—of the international system.[32] Structural Realism treated whatever variety might be found in the description of states' foreign-policy styles and outputs as, literally, beneath analytic notice, since it posited that all states' foreign policies were virtually compelled, automatic, and unintermediated responses to the imperatives of the encompassing international system.

"Preferences" vs. Parameters

Thus, in international relations theory, "bringing the state back in" has meant renewing attention to the "actor" and "actor variables," in contrast to "structure" and the determinants that percolate down from the structural condition of the international system. This tendency is not only an inevitable recentering of the pendulum, but a desirable one, in one crucial respect: it recognizes the *proximate causation* of a state's foreign policy as lying at the "unit level"—that is, the level that comprises formal state behavior, informal state behavior, and even non-state but societal and partly societal behavior.

But beyond that, what does it mean to "bring the state (back) in" to international relations? Once one has identified the state as the repository of legal (Westphalian) sovereignty, and as (or "as-if"—i.e., analytically) a unitary actor, and as the constituent member of the international system, how should we describe the *way* in which the state (or parts of the state, or other actors on the level of the state) "makes" policy and "decides" to act, in its characteristic realm of foreign (including military) policy? In other words, what constitutes a correct model of the derivation of a state's foreign policy?

Constructivism has offered a widely accepted answer, as the pendu-

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lum has swung away from structural Realism. Constructivism is a cognitive-based theoretical disposition that elevates the actor (a state or a national society) to a status that engulfs its environment, since even (otherwise) parametric factors are taken to be self-constructed. The systemic error that underlies constructivist accounts of the derivation of a state's foreign policy is the fixation on "preferences" (and, underlyingly, their "origin"). Here, the fault is not with the enterprise of identifying the (policy) "preferences" of a state or a state's elites or a national society, and, in turn, correlating those preferences with a set of norms and values, or with a characteristic institution. The fault is in (mostly implicitly) tracing those norms and institutions, and the ensuing policy preferences, directly and immediately and finally into actually resulting policies.

In some theorists' models, "*public opinion*"—which is, after all, an expression of society's "preferences"—is thus traced directly into a state's foreign policy: That is, these models assume that public opinion can predict (or even precisely and completely constrain) the state's foreign policy. But even if there *is* a public opinion on a given foreign-policy issue, and even if it is initially taken into account by policy makers, they will then have to derive the tangible requisites of the public's "preferences" by engaging in a *process* such as "the defense planning process," comprising a "hierarchy of concerns" ranging from foreign policy goals, through national strategy, through military missions, through forces-weapons-operational doctrines, and finally to resources of money and military personnel—which are then tested against the parameter of the country's "political economy." If this test fails, the resulting "feedback" will occasion the alteration of one or another of the levels of concern, possibly up to the point of forcing the alteration of the initially "preferred" foreign policy itself. Overall, this *process* is instrumentally rational.

Constructivist accounts not only impart an air of "willfulness" to the making of foreign policy, by denying both the objectivity of parameters and the rationality of the process; they cut the linkages between, on the one hand, foreign policy and its tangible requisites—notably its resource impositions—and, on the other hand, the possibility of rejection and failure in the arena of the nation's political economy. They also cut the linkages between a country's political-economic situation in the international system (roughly, "geopolitics") and the country's own "political economy."

This is hardly surprising, since constructivism is a reaction against

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structural Realism's exclusive positing of macrosystemic (that is, the international system's) causal influence, and against its hyperrational positing of an individual state's "appropriate" foreign-policy response to the encompassing structure of the international system—say, a balance-of-power situation (though, ironically, structural Realism is almost deterministic in its insistence on the state's inevitable and uniform response to this structure).

The Realist position has in its favor the objectivity of such parameters as external structural constraints—and internal societal constraints, too; plus the rationality of the state's decision processes, which allow the translation into policy of the factors that Realists hold to be determinative: the structure of the international system, its axiomatic "anarchical" condition, or some particular threats. Yet Realist theory otherwise lacks an explicit proximate-causal mechanism that would link states to the international system. Oddly, constructivism "collapses" this problem, by denying the objectivity of external parameters, and by characterizing the foreign policy of states as self-generated—not a rational response, because not really a response to anything.

From an epistemological (and ontological) standpoint, the constructivist position can be sustained only if reality is translated into (nothing but) what we (or whole societies) "think" about reality, and if what we think about reality is further translated into the symbols (mostly linguistic) in which we express the thoughts that we have about reality. Without pursuing this matter in philosophic depth, however, even ostensibly "symbolic" change, say, in another state's behavioral output, may signify a real and possibly threatening or at least inhibiting circumstance; and therefore it is as "objective" and as "given" as any admittedly "hard" factual condition, such as the state of technological knowledge, or the availability of natural resources, or the array of international power.[33] Constructivism has been posited as a kind of "middle position," between the extreme tendencies, in contemporary epistemology, of positivistic radical empiricism and post-positivistic linguistic reduction (see Patomaki and Wight 2000). My own reading of constructivism is that it *is* the extreme position, and *it* is an example of the linguisticism of taking things by their signs or symbols, and thus thinking that there is no (significant) ontological difference between the stuff of the self (whether personal or social) and the stuff of the environment, and then concluding that self and environment are equally (or similarly) manipulable or "constructed."

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How Universal Is State Rationality?

The ascription, here, of objectivity and rationality to the agents of the state's foreign policy function raises the question of the scope or "domain" of applicability of theoretical models that claim these qualities. (Of course, the question of the scope of applicability is intricately related to the question of the empirical evidence for such behavior.)

The answer falls into several categories, and in each of these, there is a descending degree of applicability of objectivity/rationality—but in virtually all cases, even the slightest, I would affirm that objective and rational consideration and choice and action pertain, to some degree, at least "implicitly" (though "implicitly" may be the last refuge of theoretical scoundrels!).

First, by function: the security function may be the area where the most rational behavior is found, for various reasons, among which is the fact that serious and possibly terminal consequences ride on the decisions.

Second, by type of polity and organization of governance: from the "post-McNamara" Pentagon, to the post-World-War-II United States, to the United States throughout its history, to similarly constitutional states, to bureaucratic states (whether constitutional or not), to "formal" states, to all states (regardless of formality), to all state-like entities.

Third, by the nature of the problem: from weapons specification, to the design of military missions, to force planning, to national (or grand) strategy, to crisis behavior, to such "politicized" issues as base closure and the choice of contractors.

Fourth, by the kind of "process": from the "defense planning process," to the choice among substantive alternatives (such as intervention or not), to the overall microeconomic allocation of inputs (subject to constraints) to achieve the optimal value of the country's "objective function."

Another part of the answer is that rationality must be understood broadly and permissively, as exhibiting the characteristics of deliberation, purpose, weighing, and a "transitive" decision process that moves from one "level" to another. Of course, in specifying and delimiting the application of rationality to these "domains," one is in some danger of verging on tautology—that is, defining rationality itself in terms of the actual behavior of some segment of a "population" that exhibits those aspects of rationality. Nevertheless, it should be possible, even intu-

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itively, to distinguish the kind of behavior that we are referring to from its opposite: random, or impulsive, or corrupt, or chaotically inconsistent, or heedless of constraints and risks. On my reading, the foreign-policy function of state exhibits (not only ideally but empirically) two qualities: (1) Observance of and respect for various kinds of parameters, as if those parameters were (to various degrees, but significantly) *objective*, and therefore either "binding" in some way; or at least, if movable, movable with remarkable difficulty and at "meta"-cost—thereby confuting the familiar varieties of subjectivism, that assert, not only that the choices (in the sense of the *acts* of choice) are virtually entirely at the will of the actors, but that the choices (in the sense of the alternatives themselves, and the total context in which those alternatives are presented) are also virtually entirely "constructed" by the actors. (2) (Itself partially because of the acknowledgement of the objective character of such factors,) *rationality*, in several recognizable senses and ways that transcend overly narrow definitions of rationality such as those implicit in theories that come under the rubric of "rational choice."

None of this would matter, of course, if constructivism were *true*. But we judge the validity of a theory of the derivation of foreign policy by the way that it takes account of the actual decision processes that are acted out by the participants in the decision, and that are *felt* by the participants to be the determinative elements in their own decision making. Such an actual decision process provides the mechanism or the proximate cause of the emergent foreign and military policy of the state. Without such correspondence, a model (however impressive its apparent predictive power, or however striking the regression curve that expresses the correlation of the posited independent variable with the dependent variable being explained) nags—or ought to nag—at us, because it could as well be an interesting story or an opaque coincidence as a valid explanation. A model lacking this Weberian, *Verstehende* correspondence may lack causality, and therefore—simply put—be wrong.

In various ways, the prevalent theoretical orientations—not only constructivism, but also structural Realism and "rational choice"—lack, or scant, this correspondence. Constructivism represents external realities, as well as some internal societal constraints, as the idiosyncratic reflection of the social actor's own preferences or cognitive makeup, and obviates the consideration of any process (especially a formal state process) that includes these realities and constraints in the production of a policy. Thus, because the (state) actor does not so much choose a strategic response and thus affect its situation, but rather "constructs" its

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situation and derives its foreign policy stance directly from its (society's) norms and institutions, constructivism represents a form of compulsion (ironically, even if "willful"), not choice—let alone the type of choice that decision makers think they face.

Structural Realism, in its extreme parsimony, deliberately excludes the consideration of the "unit-level" processes of state, and takes the structure and characteristic dynamic ("anarchy") of the international system as almost mechanistically determinative of the security decision making of any kind of state. Of course, structural Realists distinguish between a theory of international politics and a theory of foreign policy; but the point is that structural Realism not only misses, but *denies* the very process of state (which, in my model, I characterize as "the defense planning process") that transmits the impulses and constraints of the macrosystem to the decision-making unit and constitutes the proximate cause of the state's foreign and military policy.

Oddly, "rational choice" theory, which purports to be uniquely behavioral and descriptive of actual choice, both scants and misinterprets the kind of choice that produces state action. In a sense, "rational choice" presents a "*hyper*rational" model, based, as it is, on game-theoretical assumptions about strategic motivation—along with the more arguable "expected utility" calculus. Even the expected-utility schema is taken to inhere in the individual (say, an authoritative elected official, or a controlling ruler, or, at most, a tight ruling clique), and thus "rational choice" lacks a mechanism for sorting out and aggregating values at the level of state choice and action. Beyond that, its game-theoretical formalization of behavior can occur only *after* the nature of the game situation (the "name of the game," e.g., "chicken" "prisoner's dilemma," etc.) has been specified; and that specification depends on the values of the payoffs in the various, say, quadrants of the game matrix. But those payoff values depend on an array of parametric factors, including the players' own macrostrategic orientation to the game problem (minimax, maximin, minimax-regret, etc., or even some perverse orientation). (Perhaps this is what gives game-theoretical explanations their faintly tautological scent.)

Bringing Public Opinion Back In

The attribute of rationality, which can be shown to characterize, dominantly, the functioning of the foreign-policy elites of any advanced con-

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stitutional state (and, to some degree, of any formal state), tends to validate such elites' authority to perform that function—especially in the face of the substantial ignorance of the mass public. In a larger sense, the overall systemic rationality of the foreign policy *process*, when correctly conceived and "modeled," confers a certain legitimacy on that process of state. It is that systemic rationality—or "logic"—that supplies intelligibility and, above all, corrigibility, to the process, (1) by linking foreign policy to its ultimate resource requisites, and linking the state's situation in the international system to the state's "political economy," and also (2) by illuminating "mismatches" between levels of planning (say, between military missions and the force structure, or between the force structure and the budget, or even between the foreign policy itself and its draw upon public support), and thus instigating "feedback" and alteration of planning and policy.

These assertions dispute the premises of virtually all of the nonrational schools of explanatory theory (arational, irrational and subrational), as well as such paradigms as constructivism, which not only denies the actual attribution of rationality and objectivity to the work of foreign-policy makers, but denies even the possible relevance of the notions of rationality and objectivity to the function of foreign policy-making. One must depart especially from the category of subrational theories, such as bureaucratic politics, "public choice," and the "military-industrial complex." The hallmark of these subrational models is the supposed identification of a dominant impulse to accrue gains (material or status) to an individual or subgroup or interest group situated within the state or national society. From an obvious practical standpoint, and from a not-so-obvious theoretical standpoint, rationality (the operation of rationality in the actual policy process, and the ascription of rationality in the theoretical model that describes the policy process) provides the "causal" force that holds the process together and makes it intelligible.

If the nonrational models were to hold, the process would lose the force of its causation, as well as the sense of its logic. The "logic" of requirements would cease to be linked to the "logistics" of the material requisites. Mismatches could hardly be identified, let alone specified, since the concept would not have meaning. There could be no prescriptive call for the correction or realignment of such large elements as national strategy and foreign policy. Indeed, the entire model would lose its ability to "speak" in the prescriptive mode; and it is the instru-

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mental matter of prescription ("better" or "best") that begins to lead to the normative matter ("ought") of legitimacy.

Claims can be advanced that the operation of the state's foreign-policy function, and especially its external security functions, requiring a high degree of technical proficiency, rationality, objectivity, and dedication to an overall "national interest," not only is, empirically, but should be, prescriptively, the province of expert governmental (and associated commercial) professionals, and thus largely insulated from and beyond the political reach of a public that is likely to be especially ignorant of this function of state. But any empirical demonstration of, or normative justification for, the autonomy of state processes in the area of foreign and military policy bears more generally on the question of the autonomy of the state (and ultimately the sovereignty of the state). This is because foreign policy (which, in my view, is essentially security policy) is both *the* characteristic state function and (ironically) sufficiently distinctive to constitute a peculiarly interesting function in its own right.

It also happens to be the area that best illustrates (though only in a correct theoretical model) the operation of public ignorance on the derivation of state policy. Thus, the problem of public opinion is close to the heart of the theory of the state and the question of the competence of democracy as a framework for governance.

NOTES

1. See, notably, Friedman 1998 and 1997, who draws on Converse 1964; similar to Converse's seminal article are Almond 1950 and Lippmann 1927.
2. I borrow this redolent and emblematic phrase from Wendt 1992.
3. On this point, see Friedman 1998 and 1997 and DeCanio 2000. Friedman and DeCanio are, apparently, even more pessimistic about the accuracy of heuristically shaped public opinion than about plain, unformed, unmediated public ignorance.
4. As Keynes (1936, 383–84) famously opined: "Practical men . . . are generally in the thrall . . . of the ideas of . . . defunct economists."
5. Note, in contrast, my operational definition of policy as a prediction of one's own future contingent response. E.g., Ravenal 1978, 11.
6. See, for example, the alternative (and, I think, more truly expressive) costing of the components and activities of the defense budget in Ravenal 1984, particularly the chapter "A Note on Methodology," pp. 18–21; Ravenal 1991, the section "A Note On Methodology," pp. 49–51; and Ravenal 2000a, particularly the section "A Consideration of the Brookings 'Atomic Audit,' " pp. 29–37.
7. I have treated the issue of cost as an essential parameter, and as a historical mea-

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sure of U. S. foreign-policy and national-strategy ventures as broad as the entire half-century containment of Communism and the half-century deployment of nuclear weapons, in Ravenal 2000a.

8. For a description—still, after 30 years, an accurate picture—of the functions of Systems Analysis, see Enthoven and Smith 1971. For a short review of this book, making a few critical points, see Ravenal 1971.
9. Another, somewhat (necessarily) confused segment of "society" is the (professional) military. In certain respects (and in response to certain kinds of questions), the military can be seen as part of the general public. But, in certain aspects, the military constitutes a set of interest groups. And in other respects the military constitutes a group of professional (in-uniform) "bureaucrats." An interesting series of studies of the "gap" between military and civilian opinion has been conducted by Ole R. Holsti; see, particularly, Holsti 1998/99.
10. Note the work of Robert Jervis, particularly Jervis 1968, 1977, and 1970. The bibliography on elite perceptions, images, operational codes, and cognitive screens is enormous.
11. Is "ignorant" the same problem as "unstable"? This, I think, is the crux of the pathbreaking argument of Philip Converse (1964). Friedman 1997, 455, sees it this way:

> Converse drew on survey data to reveal that the public's grasp of political affairs was so meager that it was questionable whether many people could be said to have what amounted to stable political attitudes at all. Unfortunately, the "nonattitudes" thesis prompted a methodological debate that distracted attention from the most disturbing implications of Converse's findings for democracy: the sheer ignorance of public opinion (a finding implicit in the earlier work of the Columbia and Michigan schools of public-opinion research), and the fact that the "constraint" on ignorance exercised by the relatively well informed was something that is, arguably, even worse than sheer ignorance: ideology.

Converse's (and Almond's) demonstration of public attitude "instability" did not pass unchallenged in the political science literature. For example, William R. Caspary reports that the "attitude structures" of the public are "much more stable and coherent than Almond had asserted." This quotation is in the words of an article that makes informative reference to theories of public opinion: Bjereld and Ekengren 1999. This article points out that in the more recent scholarship of such theorists and Eugene R. Wittkopf and Ole R. Holsti, "citizens were now seen as more engaged and informed than was the case during the 1950s and 1960s."

My own point, in the face of—and somewhat beyond—these contending observations is that they are not dispositive in more comprehensive (and thus more accurate) models of policy derivation—just as, underlyingly, public opinion itself is not *directly* dispositive in the *generation* of the foreign policy.

The implications of Converse's findings to which Friedman refers are that the

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public, because of its inattention, fickleness, and lack of information, cannot support correct, or even rational, public choices, and thus sustain democracy as a legitimate form of rule. Is this a temporary phenomenon? Dick Morris (2000), in the words of one reviewer (the truth of which the reviewer, himself, however, doubts), "argues that modern technology has made voters better informed than ever and thus better qualified to take a more direct role in lawmaking" (quoted in Nelson 2000).

12. In short, the "so-what" factor: the differential stakes, in a cost-benefit equation, of intervening or not intervening. See the description of this factor in Ravenal 2000c.
13. I am identifying a "heuristic" that is suggested by, but different in kind from, that which is mentioned by Friedman, DeCanio, and indeed Converse and Almond: substantive "ideology." The public, in my view, inaccurately follows theorists and journalists in attributing state policy choices more or less directly to the distortive mindsets and "codes" of policymakers, or even to pathologies of personality or group interaction. This is the public's way of "understanding" the (otherwise) complex, elusive, and parameter-encased process of policy derivation.
14. The invocation of correlation, rather than causation, suggests another kind of inadequacy in many social-science models that purport to explain the derivation of public policy. Not only do such models leave the *nature* of the correlation or "association" ill defined (or perhaps "underspecified"), but they cannot provide a satisfying account of agency; and, worst of all, they must evade a description of process.
15. Allowing, of course, for some personal and organizational "interpretation." But my model, while emphasizing the "large scope" of agencies of the state, particularly in the security function, is not a theory of the autonomous (let alone "rogue") behavior of individual bureaucrats or governmental organizations. It is an integrated theory of how an *entire national society* generates "the state's" foreign policy. Within the confines of this article, there is no occasion or need either to criticize every type of nonrational model of policy derivation, or to set forth, in complete detail, my own comprehensive rational model. I do those things elsewhere in several places, including Ravenal 1998 and 2000c.
16. For an interesting survey of current trends in the organization of the defense industry, see Markusen and Costigan 1999. I would dissent from the implication, in various chapters, of the dominant influence of the "military industrial complex."
17. A particularly searching review of Allison 1999 (the revised version of Allison 1971), and, indeed, of the entire "bureaucratic politics" thesis, is Houghton 2000. This review also contains (p. 152) a useful compendium of articles critical of Allison's favored bureaucratic politics model. The review also remarks that, in Allison's 1971 edition, there is a certain "fusion" of his Model Two (organizational) and his Model III (bureaucratic).
18. I have, here, characterized the organizational politics model as an instance of the "subrational" category. Perhaps a stronger case could be made for listing organizational politics (with its "standard operating procedures") as an instance of

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the *a*rational category (which includes various cognitive models emphasizing the mindsets, operational codes, and perceptual screens of individuals, groups, and organizations).

19. Mills 1956. See also Barnet 1969 for some characteristic, and particularly redolent, statements of the thesis: "There is no way to fix a rational limit to defense spending other than by the application of old-fashioned political judgment and moral insight to the mindless expansion of the war machine." "The institutions which support the Economy of Death are impervious to ordinary logic or experience because they operate by their own inner logic. Each institutional component of the military-industrial complex has plausible reasons for continuing to exist and expand. Each promotes and protects its own interests and in so doing reinforces the interests of every other. That is what a 'complex' is—a set of integrated institutions that act to maximize their collective power" (59). "The problem, then, is not that those who make up the military-industrial complex act improperly, but that they do exactly what the system expects of them" (62). "Each [military] service embellishes 'the threat' to serve its bureaucratic interests" (63). (Here the military-industrial complex model overlaps the bureaucratic-politics model.) "The Secretary of Defense issues a Posture Statement each year which explains why the Department of Defense wants so much money and what it plans to buy with it. The statement neither identifies adequately the cost of particular forces nor gives an accurate picture of what current procurement decisions will cost in future years" (140). On the logic of official Defense Department statements, see below.
20. For a scholarly discussion of bureaucracy and rationality in foreign-policy making, see Hollis and Smith 1986.
21. The "rational-choice" school, pitching its case (typically, though not exclusively) on the level of individual behavior, and on the basis of material utility, tends to miss the implications of role-dictated behavior, let alone generally altruistic behavior. Quite ironically, "rational choice" lets *non*rationality in by the back door, in the sense that it endorses the prevalence of subrational behavior within nominally collective, goal-oriented organizations, particularly the agencies of state.
22. The latter effect leads us back to the partial validity of rational-choice explanations. See, for instance, Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, and Smith 1999. This article derives some important features of various kinds of nations' foreign policy from their leaders' need to satisfy a winning domestic (electoral or otherwise political) coalition. State motivation is thus brought down, after all, to the individual level, which, however, *is* rational. Rational-choice theory is not wrong or totally misguided; rather (a) it defines "rationality" in too restrictive a way; and (b) it leads, in its extreme methodological individualism, to a kind of skewed reductionism, which must attribute national goal-seeking to individual "rent-seeking" (thus embracing a "public-choice" variant of rational choice).
23. Theorists who themselves espouse various kinds of nonrational models of the derivation of state policy (e.g., cognitive models, psychodynamic models, bu-

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reaucratic-politics models) are, of course, happy to categorize any supposed deviation from pure rationality (whether overall or merely instrumental) as nonrational, thereby proving their point. Even most proponents of rational models, and notably adherents to the rational-choice school, seek to characterize various degrees and kinds of bounded rationality as nonrationality; and here they have a further, branched, choice: They may accommodate some aspects of nonrationality, say, by seeing a particular norm or goal within a larger scheme of decision making as nonrational, *but* seeing the implementing decision as at least instrumentally rational, thereby preserving their favored rational explanatory model. Or they may accept an opposing theorist's characterization of either an alleged norm/goal or an alleged motive (or nonmotive) for an action as nonrational, *but* deny that such a characterization represents a correct explanation of either the overall action/decision/policy or the true/underlying/implicit motive of the actor, thereby preserving their favored rational explanatory model. (For some suggestions on this point, see Elster 2000).

My own take on "bounded rationality" is this: Hardly any behavior (individual, collective, organizational) is purely rational, using a tight definition of rationality. Most intrusions of nonrationality can be accounted for (and are, in fact, generally accounted for) as constraints of various kinds. Depending on the degree and the kind of intruding nonrationality, divergent characterizations of the overall decision/policy could be seen merely as "half-full/half-empty" propositions. But there is more to it than that. In my account, the foreign and military policy of states (subject to stated qualifications on the scope of this account according to the nature of such states) is (a) broadly and recognizably ("dominantly") rational, in the normal sense of that term; and (b) more importantly, from a theoretical standpoint, rational in the overall sense of (what one may call) "total systemic logic"; such logic defines not only the purported implementation of norms and goals, but also *the accomodation of the constraints* ("parametric factors"), in a *process* that is both explicit/deliberative and implicit/existential.

24. Some other elements in this syndrome are: attribution of apparently high defense spending to the "military-industrial complex," campaigns for government-subsidized "conversion" of the defense industry, calls for the transfer of military resources to domestic government programs, an open-ended commitment to United Nations decision making, faith in the self-executing nature of regimes such as nonproliferation, and subscription to "revisionist" explanations of the origins of the Cold War.
25. Such pronouncements are far from unique; they are ubiquitous, at least over a large reach of the American political spectrum. In *The Defense Monitor* for August 2001, the Center for Defense Information similarly reported that these eight countries, plus Sudan, "together spend $116 billion, roughly one-third of the U.S. military budget."
26. I do not mean to suggest, in the foregoing observations, that the United States *should* (in an absolute act of policy) accept these burdens, in the pursuit of political-military control of large areas of the world. In fact, just the opposite: I anticipate that the American projection of force to other regions of the world

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will be progressively constrained by an array of parameters, both external (arising in the international system) and domestic (arising from public opposition to the probable casualties and the high cost of continually maintaining standing military forces) that pertain to a stance of extraregional intervention. My point here is that an *objective* understanding of these factors, and a *rational* processing of them, will be likely to produce the appropriate shift in America's national strategy (from ground-force intervention to "strike warfare") and foreign policy (from virtually global intervention for balance-of-power as well as humanitarian reasons, to sustaining U.S. domestic security). See Ravenal 2000b.

27. Such feedback is evident in program adjustments resulting, in the first instance, from stringent review by the "budget examiners" of the Office of Management and Budget in the White House, and, subsequently, from the "markups" of several congressional committees.
28. "Soft power" is the phrase of Joseph P. Nye (1990), referring to such American national assets as the attractiveness of its political system, the prowess of its economy, and the global pervasiveness of its culture. The implication (if Nye's reference—which is crucial to his thesis of the continuance of American hegemony in every important region of the world—is to have any meaning) is that such "soft power" is significantly substitutable for "hard" military power. What Nye is driving at may be gleaned from an example that he offered at a Cato Institute conference on March 31, 1992, when he suggested that "USIA libraries" might be a feasible tradeoff, for the United States, against the preparation and possible use of military force in the enterprise of establishing and enhancing American influence over the actions of various nations and governments around the world. After all, in Nye's example, one USIA library costs only about $80,000 a year (and you can imagine what the somehow equivalent U.S. forces and weapons might cost). To such a presumption, one can only say: "Put the first library in Baghdad."
29. An especially neat, while comprehensive, treatment and review of this literature—also drawing some general conclusions about these "pathways"—is presented in Cortell and Davis 2000.
30. The security function could be explained *away* by "norm diffusion" theorists, who do not deal adequately with security (except, of course, in the insubstantial apparition of "security *norms*")—explained, that is, as a special case apart from the usual issues involved in norm diffusion (justice, immigration, environment, intercommunal tolerance, human rights, democracy, racial equality, and so forth). But security policy is both central to, and the largest part of, foreign policy. A theory of policy derivation should apply to this important area.
31. For a recent, and effective, presentation of the idea of path dependence, see Pierson 2000. Note also the comment of Gary Goertz and Paul F. Diehl (1992, 653): "Although Britain and France may face the same international norms . . . the *unique national experience* of a country will make its propensity to follow that norm different." (Cited in Cortell and Davis 2000, 74.)

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32. Ironically (in my reading) Waltz felt that he had to bring the *international system* back in after several decades of the dominance of subsystem explanatory schemes, whether (in what he called the "first image") personality-based models, usually cognitive or psychodynamic; or (in what he called the "second image") state-based or society-based models, including organizational, bureaucratic-politics, interest-group, ideological, and some rational-choice theories.
33. In this respect, one should take note of a recent, full-scale critique of constructivism: Copeland 2000. This critique is in the form of a review essay of Wendt 1999. In his latest writing, Wendt seems partly to correct—or supplement—his own earlier exclusive positing of ideational and actor-generated causal factors. Copeland makes the point—which should be threatening for constructivists—that a state's leaders must be uncertain about, and therefore must hedge against, other states' *future* motives, precisely because those other states can "construct" a different, and possibly aggressive, nature.

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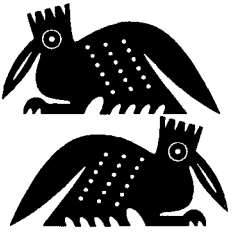

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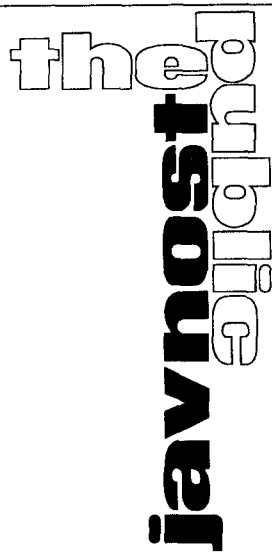

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